

## Kabariti hails Qatari prince's visit

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti on Tuesday welcomed a visit to Jordan by Qatari Crown Prince Sheikh Jasssem Ben Hamad Al Thani, who arrives here Wednesday on a two-day official visit to the Kingdom. In a statement to the Qatari News Agency, Mr. Kabariti said Sheikh Jasssem's visit to Jordan "reflects the unique brotherly relations linking Jordan with Qatar." He said "will contribute positively to further developing the relations between both countries to meet the aspirations of the two leaderships." Mr. Kabariti said he was fully satisfied with Jordan's relations with Qatar and Bahrain, which this week announced the establishment of diplomatic relations between them.

Volume 22 Number 6470

## Elections could be held in September — Ensour

By Tareq Al Momani  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordan might hold the next parliamentary elections in September instead of November to facilitate a higher voter turnout and conduct balloting in a relaxed atmosphere, Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour said Tuesday.

Under the Constitution, the next elections, which will produce the Kingdom's 13th Parliament, could be held anytime after the last regular session of the legislature ends.

The 12th Parliament, which was elected in 1993, is expected to end its last regular session this month.

"Extending the term of Parliament or postponing elections is out of question since there are no compelling circumstances that would prevent elections being held as the Constitution schedules," Dr. Ensour told Al Rai.

Dr. Ensour explained that bringing the elections forward to September instead of November, as had been expected, would secure more voter turnout.

Furthermore, he said, schools and universities — where balloting and counting are usually conducted — would be on vacation in September.

Dr. Ensour, who often serves as acting prime minister in the absence of the prime minister, Abdul Karim Kabariti, said "work" will begin soon on preparing voters' lists.

The minister, who occupies a seat representing Balqa Governorate in the current legislature, said new regulations will be issued soon concerning the distribution of electoral districts.

Prime Minister Kabariti has repeatedly affirmed that the government was open to discussing all issues related to the electoral system, including the distribution of seats and constituencies as well as other procedures related to actual voting, but that it would not entertain any suggestion that would change the current one-person, one-vote formula under which the current Parliament was elected. Parliament last month endorsed the election law, which was enacted as a temporary legislation in mid-1993, a few months ahead of the elections to the 12th legislature.

Dr. Ensour also confirmed on Tuesday that the number of seats in Parliament will be increased, but did not give any figures.

Other sources said the government was considering an increase of 20 seats in the current 80-strong House. It would also mean raising the number of seats in the appointed 40-strong Upper House (Senate) to 50, because the Constitution stipulates that the Senate should have exactly half the number of seats in the Lower House.

Dr. Ensour also said voting age will be brought down to 18 from the present 19.

Dr. Ensour said he expected 13 of the 22 ministers in the Cabinet who are also members of parliament to seek reelection to the legislature. Another ministerial source said meanwhile that Prime Minister Kabariti would reshuffle his government after His Majesty King Hussein returns from a visit to the U.S. this month.

The reshuffle is warranted to meet the constitutional requirement that anyone occupying a government position resign from the post at least three months before elections if he or she wants to run in the elections.

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## Israel to begin further W. Bank redeployment Sunday — Netanyahu

Prime minister maintains size of pullback is an Israeli prerogative

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israel expects to complete the first of three scheduled redeployments from the West Bank by Sunday, a top aide to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Tuesday.

The cabinet will meet Thursday to decide on the extent of the withdrawal and the redeployment should be carried out within 48 hours, David Bar-Ilan said.

"Due to the Sabbath it may be delayed by a few more hours and take place Saturday or Sunday," he added.

Mr. Netanyahu said in an interview with Israel Radio that redeployment, scheduled to take place by Friday, would start immediately after the cabinet decided on the scope of the withdrawal.

Jewish religious law bars any kind of work — which would include troop movements — on the Jewish Sabbath, which lasts from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday.

There had been speculation the first withdrawal would be delayed, increasing tensions already high because of Israel's decision to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

Israel has already withdrawn from major Palestinian cities in the West Bank, retaining only a small part of Hebron, and has granted partial autonomy to about 28 per cent of the West Bank and most of the Gaza Strip.

Under the agreement reached in January between Mr. Netanyahu and Yasser Arafat, Israel is to carry out three additional pullbacks from the West Bank by the end of 1999. The final status of the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem is to be determined in talks on a permanent peace settlement, scheduled to start next month.

According to the daily Yediot Ahronot, Israel intends to hand over between six and 10 per cent of West Bank in the first redeployment, while the Palestinians are demanding 20 per cent.

Mr. Bar-Ilan called the Palestinian expectations "unwarranted" but would not confirm how much territory Israel planned to hand over in the first pullback.

"I'm quite sure the size of the areas evacuated will be much smaller than speculated," Mr. Bar-Ilan said.

Palestinians want Israel to hand over 90 per cent of the West Bank by the third redeployment, but Mr. Netanyahu said that would not happen.

"If there was a different government, they would definitely move towards the Palestinian understanding that with these three redeployments they would get close to 90 per cent of the territory," he said. "This will definitely not happen."

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## Arafat: Netanyahu is still 'partner' in peace despite escalating dispute

Israeli leader shrugs off Clinton criticism of settlement plans in Arab East Jerusalem

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat said Tuesday he remains a "partner" in the peace process with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu despite an escalating dispute over a new Jewish settlement project in Arab East Jerusalem.

Mr. Netanyahu "is now my partner as (slain) Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was my partner, but we hope he will follow up upon what was agreed," Mr. Arafat told reporters at the National Press Club.

"I have to respect who the Israelis have elected," Mr. Arafat also said he was "completely satisfied" with President Bill Clinton's statement denouncing plans for the East Jerusalem settlement.

"I found (Clinton) also worried by this decision," Mr. Arafat said. "I am sure he will push with all his ability and capacities to save the peace process."

The Palestinian president also repeated his objections to the plans for 6,500 homes for Jews in the eastern sector of the Holy City which Israel occupied in 1967.

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## Madadha resigned for 'personal' reasons, Kabariti is 'likely to accept' resignation

By Francesca Ciriaci  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The government confirmed yesterday that Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Khaled Madadha had resigned but maintained that the resignation was motivated by personal reasons.

"Mr. Madadha handed in his resignation for family reasons," Minister of Information Marwan Muasher told the Jordan Times, without elaborating.

Another official source reiterated that the resignation was motivated by "purely personal reasons," and that the minister's decision was not related to the government's policy or political programme.

But, the source said, no decision has officially been taken on whether to accept Mr. Madadha's resignation, since the matter had to be discussed by the Council of Ministers.

The Council was to meet yesterday, but the meeting was cancelled.

Regular cabinet sessions are usually held on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

However, because a number of foreign dignitaries are currently visiting the country and the ministers' schedules are consequently busy, yesterday's cabinet session was called off.

The prime minister is expected to reply to Mr. Madadha's resignation letter "soon," the official source said, declining to say what the chances of rejecting or accepting the resignation were.

Informed sources told the Jordan Times that the prime minister was left with no choice but to accept Mr. Madadha's resignation, since he had already tried to keep him from leaving the Cabinet to no avail.

"The prime minister tried to convince (the minister) to stay in his post until the (Cabinet) reshuffle takes place," said one source.

"But Mr. Madadha insisted on leaving right away," the source added.

"Most likely, therefore, the prime minister will accept (Mr. Madadha's) resignation and leave his post vacant until the reshuffle," which is widely expected to take place after His Majesty King Hussein's visit to the U.S., in late March.

In the past, whenever any minister resigned, other ministers were appointed in their place, or fellow colleagues were asked to become acting ministers in

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## King holds talks with Kinkel, reaffirms support for Palestinian rights; German minister says his country and EU oppose Jewish settlements

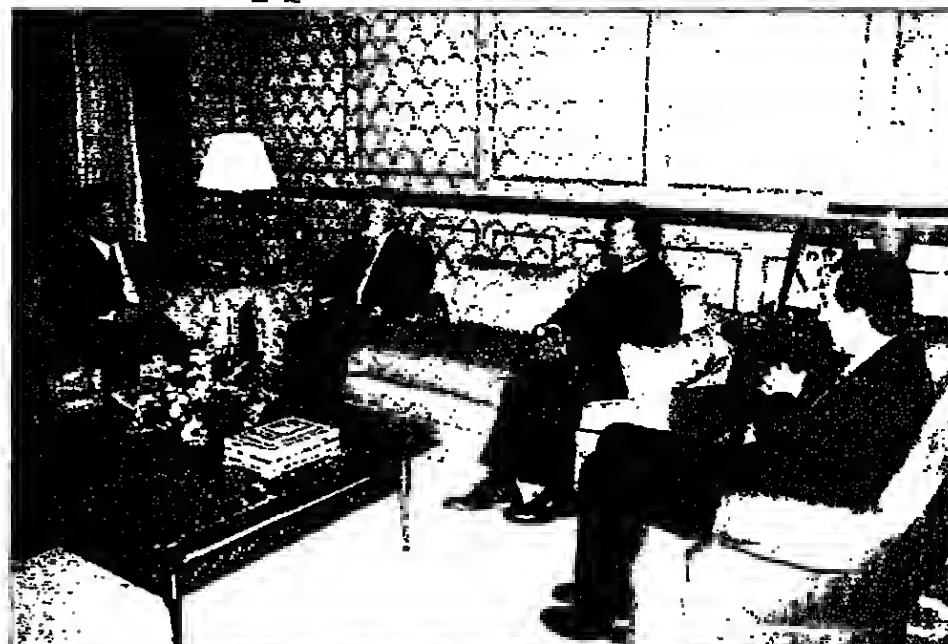
AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday held talks with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel on various issues of mutual concern and bilateral relations with particular emphasis on Jordanian-German economic cooperation.

The King, meeting Mr. Kinkel over a dinner he hosted for the German minister, also reiterated Jordan's support for the Palestinian people's legitimate rights on their soil, Jordan Television said.

Referring to Israel's plans to build a new settlement in occupied Arab East Jerusalem, Mr. Kinkel reaffirmed the German and European Union (EU) view that Jewish settlements in the occupied territories were an obstacle to peace.

The German minister arrived here Tuesday evening on a 24-hour visit accompanied by a high-level business delegation.

In an arrival statement to Jordan Television, Mr.



His Majesty King Hussein on Tuesday holds talks with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel in a meeting attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti (photo by Yousef Allam)

Kinkel said the Middle East has no alternative but peace and paid tribute to Jordan's key role in the region and in the peace process.

He said his visit to Jordan was to acknowledge that the peace process has no alternative, he said. "We Europeans, especially the

We know you know that

(Continued on page 7)

## Prince Hassan meets Aziz

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday held talks with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz on the latest developments in the Arab World, the Jordan News Agency, Petra, said.

Mr. Aziz was in Amman on his way to Moscow. The official Iraqi News Agency (INA) on Monday announced Mr. Aziz's departure for Moscow, his second visit there since November. He is due to hold talks with Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov about Baghdad's problematic relationship with the U.N. Special Commission to disarm Iraq (UNSCOM).

Mr. Aziz has accused UNSCOM of "lacking objectivity" and holds it responsible for maintaining the U.N. embargo imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The United Nations on Monday decided after a periodic review to extend the sanctions.

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and the European Union's (EU) special envoy to the Middle East on Tuesday discussed the latest developments in the Middle East peace process as well as Jordanian-EU ties and the proposed association agreement between the European bloc and the Kingdom.

Also discussed in a separate meeting at the Ministry of Water and Irrigation was prospects for EU financing for water projects as stipulated in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty, but no specific detail of the discussion was immediately available.

Miguel Angel Moratinos, making his second visit to Jordan after being named the EU's special envoy to

## Crown Prince, EU envoy review peace process and bilateral issues

European Union remains optimistic for peace despite problems, Moratinos spokesman says

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

the Middle East in November, discussed with the Crown Prince "the general themes of the peace process and what the EU was doing to advance Arab-Israeli peace negotiations," said a spokesman for the Spanish diplomat.

Mr. Moratinos, who arrived here from Israel and leaves here today, paid tribute to Jordan's role in the regional peace process and particularly the successful mediation effort undertaken by His Majesty King Hussein that led to the Israeli-Palestinian agreement on Hebron in January, said the spokesman, Christophe Farnaud.

Despite the difficulties involved in the peace process and the current crisis over Israeli plans to build a Jewish settlement in the Arab East Jerusalem, the EU remains optimistic that the Israeli-Palestinian

final status negotiations would produce a just and durable peace agreement, said Mr. Farnaud.

"We are working behind the scenes," said the spokesman. "We will be there although we will not actually be taking part (in the final status negotiations), and we will try to do what we can," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Moratinos wanted to hear Jordanian viewpoints on the various issues involved in the peace process and hence the visit to Amman, said the spokesman.

The special EU envoy met with French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette in Tel Aviv on Monday and is scheduled to meet with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel — who began a visit to Jordan Tuesday

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## Central Bank takes over Amman Investment Bank

By Khaled Zubeidi  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Central Bank of Jordan (CBJ) on Tuesday dissolved the board of directors of the Amman Investment Bank (AIB) and appointed a special committee to take its place.

The committee, chaired by CBJ Vice President Ahmad Abdul Fattah, groups representatives of the ministries of finance and industry and trade as well as an auditor.

A high-ranking CBJ official told the Jordan Times that the Central Bank was now studying bids to buy the AIB with all its assets and liabilities which have not been estimated yet. The sale will be aimed at protecting the rights of depositors, said the official.

According to the official, who preferred anonymity, the AIB board and the bank's shareholders failed to restructure the bank's capital by injecting more

capital or attracting external bids.

He said the CBJ had given the troubled bank sufficient time to take these measures but the AIB board and shareholders had failed to respond.

The Arab Bank Limited, which is one of the major Arab banks and the largest in Jordan, earlier sought to buy the AIB and to transform it to an Islamic bank unit.

Despite the fact that the CBJ had sponsored the negotiations for this transaction, an agreement was not reached because of the shareholders' demands that they be given further time for restructuring the bank's capital. The CBJ had provided material and moral support for shareholders to fulfill their promise in restructuring the bank's capital and also gave them sufficient time for that, but none of these promises had

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

The Home of Dar Al Bir is recruiting substitute mothers to care for the children at Dar Al Bir within the following qualifications:

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- Has the heart and the will to work with orphaned children

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HRH Princess Zein Bint Al-Hussein, Royal Palace, Amman.



## Khartoum alleges 'suspicious' troop movements on Sudan's borders

KHARTOUM (Agencies) — A senior Sudanese parliamentarian has spoken of what he called suspicious Eritrean and Egyptian troop movements on the borders with Sudan, as Khartoum's war with rebel guerrillas continues.

An Eritrean presidential adviser said in remarks published on Tuesday he was in Sudan to resolve differences between the two countries.

Sudan has accused Eritrea of direct military support for Sudanese rebels bent on toppling the Islamist Khartoum government. Asmara, which serves as a base for Sudan opposition groups, denies the charge.

The Sudanese privately-owned Akhbar Al Yom newspaper quoted the adviser, Mohammad Abdul Gasim Haj Hamad, as saying he was not trying to reconcile opposition groups with Khartoum.

"The purpose of my visit is to brief the Sudanese authorities about my initiative," Mr. Hamad said. "We aim at settling the differences between Sudan and Eritrea which is a necessity for settling other differences."

He did not elaborate. Attacks by the rebels gained momentum in January when they clashed with Khartoum's forces in Sudan's east and south.

Musa Hussein Dirar, chairman of the administrative accountability committee of the national assembly, was Tuesday quoted by the official Al Sudan Al Hadith newspaper as saying that "suspicious movements of Eritrean troops supported by tanks and rocket launchers were seen on Sudan's eastern border."

Those troops, Mr. Dirar said, were noticed "disappearing into the Eritrean depth, and then suddenly reappearing near the border."

He added that Eritrean naval forces were also monitored moving about in the Red Sea.

Mr. Musa, a Port Sudan deputy who is a member of the government's emergency committee, has recently returned from a 40-day tour of Red Sea states, which borders on Eritrea.

He also alleged that Egyptian troops in the disputed Halaib territory have been conducting "suspicious movements, code-named 'exercises'."

Meanwhile, the Sudanese presidential affairs minister, Major General Abdul Rahim Mohammed Hussein, reiterated Khartoum's determination to retake the eastern Sudanese towns of Karmak and Qessan and all other territories occupied by rebel forces since January.

"The concerned military

authorities are busily and quietly preparing to retake those territories," Akhbar Al Yom quoted Mr. Hussein, who has recently returned from a tour of eastern Sudan, as saying.

In another development, Iraq has expressed its support to Sudan in "facing conspiracies," as termed by Baghdad's justice minister, who has been on a visit to Khartoum.

Shebib Al Malik, in Khartoum as an envoy of President Saddam Hussein, was Tuesday cited in Akhbar Al Yom as saying that Iraq "supports Sudan's territorial integrity and demands of the aggressive countries to withdraw their troops and to stop interfering in Sudan's domestic affairs."

The state-owned Al Sudan Al Hadith daily quoted him as saying the "Iraqi government and its people support Sudan against the plots being woven against it."

"Aggressor countries must withdraw their forces from Sudanese land and refrain from interfering in its internal affairs," he was quoted as saying.

Mr. Malik said his visit to Iraq was part of "continuous consultations between the two countries." Sudan supported Iraq in the 1990 Gulf crisis and remains one of Baghdad's few friends in the region.

Sudanese opposition members have said Iraq sent arms to the Khartoum government to help it fight rebels but state officials denied this.

In Kampala, Uganda, the state-run New Vision newspaper said Tuesday Sudanese troops and Ugandan rebels shelled Uganda's northwestern town of Koboko during the weekend, injuring one person.

The victim was injured when two mortar rounds landed on a grass-thatched hut in the town, the newspaper said.

Aid workers in the region told AFP that three mortar shells fell on the town on Saturday.

Koboko is about one kilometre from the Zaïrean border and 12 kilometres south of the Sudanese border town of Kaya. Security forces told the new vision that the bombs came from an area west of Kaya. The shelling comes amid reports of a massive build-up of Ugandan and Sudanese troops on both sides of the border.

Last month, Uganda said that Sudanese warplanes bombed the northern town of Moyo, and it threatened to retaliate against the Khartoum regime.

Sudan denied the accusation and accused Kampala of seeking to escalate tensions in the troubled region.

## Arafat names Gaza centre after Ron Brown

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat Monday hailed former U.S. Commerce Secretary Ron Brown as a "brave friend of the Palestinian people" as he named a \$100 million business centre on the Gaza Strip in Brown's honour.

Mr. Arafat also presented Brown's family with the Star of Palestine medal at a ceremony here just two days after ground was broken on the project, which had been actively promoted by the late secretary.

Brown died in a plane crash last April in Croatia, where he had been leading a trade delegation.

In 1994 he visited the Gaza Strip, from which Israeli troops have now withdrawn under terms of the Palestinian-Israeli peace deal, and was moved by the level of poverty and suffering he witnessed there.

Brown subsequently became an active supporter of a plan to build a business services complex on the Gaza Strip to attract foreign investors to the territory, which under the 1993 accord with Israel was to be administered by Palestinians.

"Ron Brown understood the relationship between commerce and peace better than anyone," said Ziad Karim, head of the Virginia-based General Resources Design Group, one of the firms building the 15-floor hotel and business centre.

"He knew that you can't



Alma Brown (left, the widow of Ron Brown, the U.S. commerce secretary who died in a plane crash last year), admires the Star of Palestine Medal President Yasser Arafat is about to award her at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Washington on Monday (AFP photo)

have peace if you don't have bread."

Appearing before dozens of ambassadors, members of congress and other dignitaries at a glittering dinner at the Ritz Carlton Hotel here, Mr. Arafat spoke with emotion of the late secretary.

"We offer this medal in the name of the Palestinian people to a friend of the Palestinian people," he told Brown's widow Alma.

"He was a brave man in all the meaning of the word... Blessings on his soul. We will continue on the road to a just and comprehensive peace in the land of peace, Palestine."

Funds for the project

were raised among private investors, which according to Karim "represents a strong vote of confidence in the peace process."

The centre will employ more than 2,000 people during construction and should provide more than 600 permanent jobs, according to planners, who predicted it will ultimately create as many as 4,000 jobs and inject more than \$50 million a year into the Gaza economy.

It will offer around 4,000 metres of office space, with copying, faxing and communications facilities. The project also had the backing of Builders for

Peace, a group established three years ago by Vice-President Al Gore to harness the business energies of the Arab and Jewish communities in the United States.

In addition to General Resources Design Group, the other participants in the construction are Digicell Corporation, Hughes Network Systems, the Palestinian National Authority and Salam International Investment of Qatar.

Mr. Arafat held talks with President Bill Clinton at the White House on Monday and secured a U.S. condemnation of an Israeli plan to build a Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem.

## UAE, Britain discuss defence pact

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Britain and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) were holding talks this week on the implementation of a landmark defence agreement signed in November, the British embassy said on Tuesday.

Hew Pike, deputy commander of the British land forces, held talks with UAE armed forces Chief of Staff, General Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahayan and other senior army officers before flying back to London on Tuesday.

"He was here for three days and the talks covered defence cooperation to build on the defence agreement signed recently," the information attaché at the British embassy in Abu Dhabi, Heidi Minshall, told AFP. She declined to say whether the talks included arms sales or deployment of British troops in the UAE under the November 28 defence pact. British Defence Secretary Michael Portillo and UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahayan signed the accord in Abu Dhabi after nearly three years of negotiations.

## Mubarak launches controversial \$30 million identity card project

CAIRO (AP) — President Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday inaugurated a project to give every Egyptian a national identification card (ID) with a unique number.

The IDs face a court challenge by members of the Coptic Christian minority, who want religion removed from the document.

The Copts make up 10 per cent of Egypt's 60 million people, most of whom are Sunni Muslims.

The so-called "national number" project was launched at a ceremony in Cairo that was attended by Mr. Mubarak. Interior ministry officials explained how the cards would be issued and how difficult it will be to forge them. The ministry is responsible for internal security.

The project aims at giving every Egyptian a unique, 14-digit number to use from birth to death in all official dealings. The number will include a code indicating when and where a person was born, and the card will list name, sex, religion and other personal details.

Egyptians currently carry identification papers that have been issued at local police stations, but they do not have a unique number. There has been confusion in the past between people with similar names, and there has been no

central registry.

The government hopes that assigning the new numbers and issuing plastic IDs will make it harder to forge identity papers.

The cards also will be used to check election lists. There have been complaints in the past that the election lists are full of the names of people long dead.

The government has been working on the national number project since 1993. It estimates it will take three years — and 100 million Egyptian pounds (\$30 million) — to get new IDs to all citizens.

Coptic Christian lawyer Mamdouh Nakhla has filed suit seeking to get religion removed from the IDs. He argues that the information can be used to discriminate against Christians and notes that religion is not listed on passports.

Milad Hanna, a prominent Christian urban planner who formerly served in the parliament, said he believed there should be no mention of religion "to stop religious discrimination."

He added: "I have pride in my religion, and it should remain in the (official) files to deal with issues like marriage and inheritance. But it should not be on the ID card."

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Masked gunmen kill Palestinian officer

GAZA CITY (AFP) — An officer in the Palestinian self-rule security forces was murdered by masked gunmen as he left his home Tuesday in the Gaza refugee camp of Deir Balah, hospital sources said. The gunmen opened fire on Ismail Salih Hasuna, 35, from the preventative security services, killing him and wounding a colleague, Raafat Abu Samak, the source at Shifa Hospital in Gaza City said. The attackers' identity and the reason for the killing were not known and the murder is under investigation by Palestinian police. Hasuna had been a leader in the Fatah Hawks in Deir Balah during the 1987-1993 intifada. Wanted by Israel, he later fled the Gaza Strip for Egypt. He returned to Gaza in 1994 with the creation of the Palestinian self-rule authority as a member of the preventative security, one of a dozen security forces under the authority.

### Israel: Indonesia ties could help peace

JAKARTA (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said in an interview with a Jakarta newspaper that strengthening ties with Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country, would help the peace process in the Middle East. "I believe strong relations between Israel and Indonesia can benefit both countries economically and politically, and I am sure it can contribute immensely to solidifying peace in the Middle East," Mr. Netanyahu told the Jakarta Post in a written interview published on Tuesday. The two countries do not have diplomatic ties but the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin made an official visit to Jakarta in 1993. Jakarta has said it will not open diplomatic links with Israel until a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem is achieved. Mr. Netanyahu also reiterated that Israel would not accept the unilateral declaration of an independent Palestinian state. "A declaration by chairman (Yasser) Arafat of a Palestinian state would be a lethal blow to the Oslo agreement... and leave Israel no option but to defend itself against the threat that such a state would pose," he said.

### Lebanese university teachers on strike

BEIRUT (R) — Some 1,600 lecturers at state-run Lebanese University began a two-day strike on Tuesday to protest against the government's refusal to meet their long-standing demands. The demands include appointment of deans of faculties, full tenure for contract staff, a new pay scale, a cost of living pay rise and other pay benefits. Professor Issam Khalifeh, head of the executive committee of the university teachers, told Reuters. The strike idled 45,000 students at the university. It did not affect private institutions. "It is a general strike that closed all (state-run) university campuses in Beirut and the regions," Mr. Khalifeh said.

### Court upholds conviction of settler

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israel's supreme court on Tuesday upheld the murder conviction and life sentence of a Jewish settler who shot and killed a bound, blindfolded Palestinian in 1993. Yoram Skolnick, a settler from the Hebron area, shot and killed 21-year-old Musa Abu Sabha in March 1993 at the Jewish settlement of Sussiya. Several settlers discovered Sabha with a knife near the settlement's school. Before being overpowered, Sabha stabbed one of his captors. Skolnick, who lived on a nearby settlement, heard of the attack on a radio in his car and raced to the scene. When he arrived, other settlers had bound Sabha's hands and feet and blindfolded him. Skolnick walked up to Sabha and fired nine bullets at point-blank range. Skolnick said he believed the Palestinian was about to throw a grenade.

### Four killed in Egypt floods

CAIRO (AFP) — Four people have been killed and 19 injured in floods which swept the Cairo region and northern Egypt, newspapers here reported on Tuesday. Al-Gumhuriya said two teenagers, aged 13 and 18, were killed by an electrical short-circuit in the Cairo region, while 10 people were injured when a mini-bus overturned because of the heavy rains on Sunday and Monday. Another road crash left two dead and nine injured north of the capital, said the daily Al-Ahram.

### 32 drug traffickers arrested in Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — The authorities arrested 32 drug traffickers Tuesday in the Mashhad region of northeastern Iran and seized 635 kilograms of opium and hashish, the official news agency IRNA said. The traffickers belonged to four drug distribution networks, it added. Iranian police said last Wednesday that more than 150 tonnes of various types of drugs have been confiscated in Iran over the past 11 months. Iran is a transit point for opium, heroin, morphine and hashish from Pakistan and Afghanistan that is headed for Europe.

### JORDAN TELEVISION

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#### PROGRAMME TWO

14:05 .....The Muppet Show  
14:30 Cartoon — Adventures of the Rainbow Pond  
15:00 .....French Programmes  
16:00 .....America's Funniest People  
16:25 .....Escape from Jupiter  
16:50 .....Doc — Challenge  
17:30 .....Border Town  
18:00 .....French Programmes  
19:30 .....News Headlines  
19:35 .....Comedy — Grace Under Fire  
20:00 .....The Fifth Estate  
20:30 .....Challenges  
21:10 Drama — Spencer for Hire  
22:00 .....News in English  
22:25 .....Cobra  
23:00 .....Hart to Hart

#### PRAYER TIMES

04:38 .....Fajr  
05:55 .....(Sunrise)Dhuhr  
11:47 .....Dhuhr  
15:05 .....Asr  
17:39 .....Maghreb  
18:56 .....Isha

#### CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swefieh, Tel. 810740  
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.  
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590  
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.  
De la Salle Church Tel.

## JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

661757.

Terra Santa Church Tel. 622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Armenian International Church Tel. 827126

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.

Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

#### WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Skies will be partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rainfall and winds westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman .....04/11

Aqaba .....09/21

Deserts .....03/14

Jordan Valley .....10/18

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Aqaba 22 Humid-

ity readings: Amman 96 per cent. Aqaba 40 per cent.

#### USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

##### NIGHT DUTY

Dr. Hisham Kan'an .....790386

Dr. Ghaleb Zawadeh .....736011

Dr. Khalid Asfour .....699440

Dr. Bilal Al Sayyid .....890280

Firas pharmacy .....661912

Ferdows pharmacy .....890280

Al Asema pharmacy .....637055

Al Salam pharmacy .....636730

Yacoub pharmacy .....644945

Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

Nairokh pharmacy .....623672

Najib pharmacy .....847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mazen Abu Baker .....276832

Al Quds pharmacy .....(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Akram Haddad .....985550

Khalifeh pharmacy .....985417

#### EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111

Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

Rescue Police 192. 621111. 637777

Fire Brigade .....617101

Blood Bank .....775121

Highway Police .....843402

Traffic Police .....896390

Public Security Department 630321

Hotel Complaints .....605800

Price Complaints .....661176

Water and Sewerage Complaints .....897467

Amman Municipality Complaints .....787111

Telephone Information (directory assistance) .....121

Overseas Calls .....010230

Central Amman Telephone. Repairs .....623101

Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101

Jordan Television .....773111

Radio Jordan .....774111

Water Authority .....680100

Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power Company 636381

RJ Flight Information 08-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

#### HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32

Khalidi Maternity. 64281/6

Akileh Maternity. 64241/2

Jabal Amman Maternity 642362

Malhas. J. Amman .....636140

Palestine, Shmeisani 607071

Shmeisani Hospital 669131

University Hospital 845845

Al-Muasher Hospital 66727/9

The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37

Al-Ahli, Abdali .....664164/6

Italian, Al-Muhajreen 77101/3

Al-Bashir .....775111/26

Army, Marka .....891611/15

Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50

Amal Hospital .....674155

The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery .....865199

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323

Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560

Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732

Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555

Greek Catholic Hospital 10227275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

mation department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)53200 where it should always be verified.

Information on other flights are supplied on phone 08 (527001 or 08)532501.

#### ARRIVALS

##### Royal Jordanian (RJ)

Flights

07:25 .....Damascus (RJ)

07:35 .....Lamaca (RJ)

08:15 .....Jeddah (RJ)

08:50 Dhab, Abu Dhabi (RJ)

15:05 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)

15:50 .....Frankfurt (RJ)



## Queen Noor honours donors to Al Amal Cancer Centre

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 75 donors to the Amal Cancer Centre (ACC) were honoured Tuesday by Her Majesty Queen Noor, who presented them with certificates and keys to the centre during the ACC's first donor appreciation ceremony, a Royal Court statement said.

The Queen also met with members of the ACC's National Task Force and expressed her wish that the ACC develop "into a centre of hope with the support of all the people of Jordan."

She added that it is the "generosity, compassion and dedication of so many Jordanians that this beginning has been made possible," the statement said.

The Amal Cancer Centre

will be Jordan's first comprehensive centre, specialised in early detection, treatment and rehabilitation of cancer patients, both nationally and regionally.

According to Vice-Director of Management and Planning Lina Latouf, the "construction of the centre is complete and it is now operational."

She added that "the women's clinic is now receiving patients for breast cancer screening, mammography, ultrasound, gynaecological exams and education and counselling. In addition, the healthy diet and 'stop smoking' clinics are now operational."

Other departments within the hospital which are now fully functional include

paediatrics, the laboratory, radiotherapy and adult oncology, the statement said.

The ACC is affiliated with St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital in the United States, the South West Cancer Centre in Holland and the National Cancer Centre in Egypt.

Attending the ceremony were former prime ministers Zeid Rifai, Taher Masri and Abdul Salam Majali, Minister of Water and Irrigation Samir Kassar, President of the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) Dr. Abdullah Khatib and Mohammed Yousef Taher, who represented the donors, as well as other officials.

## Prince opens two-day conference on language and speech impediments

AMMAN (Petra) — Chief Chamberlain HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid Tuesday opened a two-day conference on language and speech difficulties, organised by Al Zaitouneh National University, and presented a report covering the 1993 Disabled Welfare Law.

Addressing the opening session, Prince Ra'd stated that the conference's importance was linked to its contribution to the preparation of programmes designed to address speech and language difficulties.

The Prince thanked the university for convening the conference and stated that it would help clarify needs of those impacted by speech and language difficulties, while preparing corrective programmes.

He called for increasing the number of qualified teachers to both instruct those suffering from these disabilities and to train others.

The two-day conference will cover 16 reports on language difficulties and hearing impairments.



Chief Chamberlain HRH Prince Ra'd Ben Zeid Tuesday opens a two-day conference on language and speech difficulties (Petra photo).

Specialists from Al Hussein Medical Centre are also participating in the conference as are representatives of national universities in Jordan and specialists in speech and language difficulties and hearing impairments.

The opening ceremony was attended by Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour, Minister of Education Munther Masri and ministry secretaries.

## Jordanian cultural season to open this month in Paris

AMMAN (J.T.) — Over 30,000 French tourists visited Jordan in 1996 and the number is expected to rise this year due to the "Jordanian Season," a cultural event focusing on Jordanian archaeology, to be held in Paris beginning this month, Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Saleh Irshaidat announced Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference with French Ambassador to Jordan Bernard Bajole, Dr. Irshaidat said that Jordan expects intensive media campaigns, seminars and lectures regarding the Kingdom's attractions during the cultural event slated to commence on Mar. 11 and last until Jan. 15.

He stated that the event will be a chance to orient the French public on tourist and cultural sites in the Kingdom.

Dr. Irshaidat described the event as beginning with Her Majesty Queen Noor receiving the Dead Sea Scrolls from France, subsequent to their examination and restoration by French specialists.

The scrolls, discovered in 1948, are considered an important source for the region's history, he said, adding that when found, the scrolls were partially burnt.

The Queen, jointly with the French president's wife, will open an exhibition of contemporary Jordanian art, featuring the work of Jordanian artists as well as artefacts, traditional costumes and ceramics.

They will then open an exhibition displaying handicrafts, jewellery and carpets, the minister said, while the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities will display posters, leaflets

and photographs highlighting the country's historical sites.

Mr. Bajole said that the Parisian event will help orient the French public on Jordan's tourist attractions and antiquities and help market Jordan throughout Europe.

The minister affirmed that the tourism industry grew following the conclusion of the peace treaty between Jordan and Israel in 1994.

This increased number of tourists last year earned the country JD 770 million, he added.

A 2.5 per cent increase in tourists visiting the Kingdom was registered last year, a number lower than expected due to political developments in the region after April, Dr. Irshaidat added.

When queried as to joint Jordanian-Israeli tourism programmes, Dr. Irshaidat maintained that this sort of joint promotion dates back to the signing of the peace treaty.

He said that the joint effort succeeded in 1995 and 1996 in attracting a number of American tourists who visited both Israel and Jordan, registering 10 per cent of the total number of tourists visiting the Kingdom over these two years.

Regarding Jordanian-Palestinian-Israeli coordination in attracting visitors to celebrate the 2000 anniversary of the birth of Christ, the minister affirmed that the three parties have begun to study arrangements for the event.

He stated that a minimum of 15 million tourists are expected to make a pilgrimage to the holy land to mark the anniversary.

## Amman prosecutor refers slander case to Court of First Instance

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Amman Prosecutor Jamal Zou'by Tuesday referred the case file of three journalists from the satirical weekly tabloid Abed Rabbo to the Amman Court of First Instance, judicial sources stated.

Editors Ontar Nadi, Yousef Gheishan and journalist Abdul Hadi Raji Majali were formally charged of tarnishing the image and dignity of individuals, slander, and publishing false news items.

The case against the three was filed by Minister of Public Works and Deputy Abdul Hadi Majali, following the appearance of a news item in the Jan. 19 issue, accusing him of stealing cars.

According to one judicial source, Prosecutor Zou'by is expected to refer another case to the same court, regarding a similar lawsuit filed by Islamist Deputy Ibrahim Zeid Kilani.

The newspaper had described Mr. Kilani as a hypocrite.

Both Messrs. Gheishan and Nadi, who were detained for several days after the complaints were filed, pleaded not guilty to the charges.

When questioned by Prosecutor Zou'by in January, Mr. Nadi said that he was on vacation when the items were published, while Mr. Gheishan told the prosecutor that he was not the editor-in-chief of the newspaper.

In a previous interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Gheishan charged that Deputies Kilani and Majali were in sensitive positions, due to upcoming elections, and that this was the motivating factor for their lawsuit against the newspaper.

He further stated in the interview, "If these news items had been published six months earlier, none of the two would have been interested in filing a lawsuit against us."

## Four persons testify in Masri case

By Rana Hussein  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Four people testified Tuesday in the case of Mazen Masri, a man accused of killing his two children in September of last year.

Last year, Mr. Masri reportedly confessed to authorities to poisoning his two children Hanin, nine, and Hani six, by administering cyanide pills he had reportedly purchased during a business trip to Canada.

Under oath, Hani Masri, the defendant's father, described Mazen Masri's relationship with his children as intimate and his relationship with his wife as "good."

The defendant's father denied that his son was financially burdened, describing the latter as "financially relaxed," often purchasing expensive gifts for his wife and children.

In his confession in front of the authorities on Sept. 25, 1996, Mazen Masri reportedly said that he killed his children as he was suffering financial difficulties.

He blamed his wife for these problems, claiming she was extravagant and did not help him in his

work. In his testimony Tuesday, Hani Masri told the court that he was prevented from seeing his son when the latter was detained at the Shmeisani Police Station on Sept. 23.

"The police refused to allow me to see my son, and it is not true that I had lunch with him while he was kept at the police station as some police officials have claimed," Hani Masri said.

He added that when his son confessed in front of him he was speaking as if previously programmed.

"When I entered the room the prosecutor started asking my son questions and he answered as if he was programmed — just like a tape recorder," Hani Masri said.

Also testifying for the defence was the defendant's mother L'edal Hijazi, who confirmed that her son loved his children and that his life was "normal" and "happy."

Asked by the prosecutor whether she was threatened or asked to be questioned by authorities, Ms. Hijazi responded in the negative.

"No police official pressured or interrogated me," she stated.

In January, Mr. Masri

retracted his previous confessions, claiming that the authorities threatened to interrogate his family in his stead.

Usama Rida Hassan, 34, an employee at the Telecommunications Company testified Tuesday that he offered Mazen Masri a job with a JD 700 salary, one day before the children were murdered.

General Director of the Information Centre at the Prime Ministry Issa Suleiman Otoum also said that he had indirectly offered work to the defendant.

"Mr. (Mazen) Masri attended several workshops, and my impression was that he was diligent in his work and I thought that we could benefit from him in our workplace."

Asked by the court as to whether Mr. Otoum felt that there were competitors with the defendant in his work, he stated that he did not feel that anyone competed with the defendant during the workshops he had attended.

The court tribunal, presided over by Justices Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq, Miftah Mubeldin and Ismael Hmouz postponed the case until Mar. 23 to hear other witnesses in the case.

## Defence team rests in lese majeste case

AMMAN — The defence team in the case of two journalists accused of lese majeste Tuesday rested their case at the State Security Court, opening the way for the prosecution to present their closing arguments in the case.

Nahed Hattar, 37, and Abdullah Abu Ruman, 23, are both charged with slandering His Majesty King Hussein and HRH Crown Prince Hassan.

Both men pleaded not guilty to the charges in February.

Former Minister of Information Hani Khasawneh Tuesday told the court that he had read the majority of Mr. Hattar's articles and felt they were strong.

"The defendant (Mr. Hattar) wanted to prove that the Jordanians were nationalists and loved Palestine as much as the Palestinians did," Dr. Khasawneh said.

Mraweid Tal, who also testified for the defence,

described a poem, which Mr. Abu Ruman included in an unpublished draft article, as pertaining to his father, Mustafa Wahbi Tal.

The prosecution had charged that the poem, part of an article written by Mr. Abu Ruman and kept locked in his office, slandered the King and the Royal family.

"This poem was printed and published by the Ministry of Culture and distributed in the market," Mr. Tal told the court.

Mr. Abu Ruman told the court in February that the piece he wrote did not include any word or reference which could be interpreted to slander the King.

Charges against the two stem from articles they allegedly wrote during and after unrest in the south of the country in mid-August, following a government decision to increase bread prices.

According to the prosecution

charge sheet, documents seized by police during a raid on the defendants' office last year, included original drafts and articles believed to be the basis for the lese majeste charges.

The seized materials, apparently criticised authorities for their decision to lift bread subsidies.

The two could face a civil trial on charges of propagating material which harms national unity and relations between Jordan and Palestine, sows sectarianism and ethnicism, instigates violence, terror and hatred, and undermines national unity.

At the end of the court session, State Prosecutor Ahmad Harran asked the court for time to prepare his closing arguments in the case.

The court tribunal postponed the case for March 15 to hear the prosecution's closing argument in the case. — R.H.

## JES to convene seminar tackling air pollution

AMMAN (Petra) — The Jordan Environment Society (JES) today will convene a seminar regarding air pollution in the Hashemieh district of Zarqa, in conjunction with the Friedrich Nauman Foundation (FNF) and with the participation of private and public sector institutions.

A JES statement said that participants will hear lectures regarding air pollution sources in the Hashemieh district as well as measures undertaken by the Jordan Petroleum Refinery Company (JPRC), Al Hussein Thermal Power Station and the Khirbet Al Samra wastewater treatment plant were the main sources of air pollution in the Hashemieh district.

The study also demonstrated that the thermal power station consumes an

annual 600,000 tonnes of fuel, causing the emission of poisonous gases which directly affect most of the district's surrounding areas.

These emissions of pollutants tend to increase during the morning, the statement said, and high rates of sulphur in used fuel intensify air pollution, according to the RSS statement.

The study concluded by urging those concerned with the situation to accelerate the creation of special units to monitor and treat noxious gases emitted from Al Hussein Thermal Power Station and the JPRC.

It also urged the Ministry of Health to examine the study and propose measures to stem poisonous emissions affecting the local population.

served as ambassador to Germany, (covering also Sweden, Denmark, and Norway) and, before that, Japan and Greece.

He had served as head of the Political Department at the Foreign Ministry and director of the prime minister's office during the government of Mudar Badran.

Meanwhile, local press reports have suggested that Minister of Interior Awad Khleifat is in disagreement with the government and thinking of resigning.

In a recent press conference, Dr. Khleifat sought to dismiss last year's government claims that Iraq was behind the bread riots, which hit the southern town of Karak in August.

Dr. Khleifat reportedly expressed his intention to resign when the expected government reshuffle will take place in April.

## Madadha resigned for 'personal' reasons

(Continued from page 1)

what is called a "limited reshuffle."

"In Mr. Madadha's case, there would be no need to name a replacement since the prime minister himself holds the foreign affairs portfolio," another source said.

In a telephone interview with the Jordan Times, Mr. Madadha refused to disclose the reasons behind his resignation, saying he would comment only if the prime minister contradicted what "I wrote in my (resignation) letter."

"Out of courtesy and for ethical reasons, I do not think I should elaborate on my resignation. Only if and when the prime minister says something different from what I wrote (in my resignation letter), will I be

forced to issue a statement," Mr. Madadha said.

Mr. Madadha is the second minister in the 13-month-old Kabariri government to hand in a resignation. Minister of Post and Telecommunications Jamal Saraih submitted his resignation in December, citing Mr. Kabariri's "haughty attitude" and "disrespect for his colleagues" as the main reasons behind his decision.

Mr. Saraih later withdrew his resignation, however, after intervention by the Royal Court and Cabinet colleagues. Before joining the Kabariri government, in February 1996, Mr. Madadha served as resident ambassador in Belgium and to the European Union (EU).

Before taking up his post in Brussels, Mr. Madadha, 60,

## What's Going On

### CONCERT

\* Performance by the Egyptian Arab Musical Band, directed by Salah Ghabbashi, at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

### LECTURE

\* "The Rock Art of the Near East" by Professor Emmanuel Anati at the Friends of Archaeology Center at 6:00 p.m. (Tel. 696682)

### EXHIBITIONS

\* Works by Paris-based Syrian artist Ziad Dalloul at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh, until April 3. Also displaying works by contemporary Arab artists.

\* Display of musical equipment, sponsored by the National Music Conservatory, at the Royal Cultural Centre, until March 5.

\* Sculptures by Zaki Sallam at Baladna Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 687598), until March 15.

\* Works by artist Amanda Shehadeh at the French Cultural Centre, until March 6.

**ERRATA:** In yesterday's article "Public figures to form lobby for recovery of Jordanians' properties in Israel," Mr. Nasrawi's first name was wrongly spelled "Kamal."

Also, Mr. Nasrawi's title is "former director of documentation at the Department of Lands and Survey," and not "former director of the Department of Lands and Survey," as stated in the article.

Finally, Mr. Marwan Dudin's title is "former minister of the occupied territories," and not "former director of the Department for Palestinian Affairs." The Ministry of Occupied Territories Affairs was transformed into what is currently the Department for Palestinian Affairs.

The Jordan Times regrets the error.



## Zaire rebels close in on key garrison town after major army setback

KISANGANI, Zaire (AFP) — Zairean rebels Tuesday closed in on the key garrison city of Kisangani, on the heels of scores of thousands of fearful Rwandan refugees fleeing before their relentless advance.

"The noose is tightening," confirmed rebel chief Laurent-Désiré Kabila in his headquarters town of Goma on the border with Rwanda, 500 kilometres to the east of Kisangani, Tuesday morning.

Journalists who flew into the airport of the town of Kindu, on the Zaire River south of Kisangani, found the mainly Tutsi rebels in control there Tuesday. They also claimed Monday to have captured the town of Manono in the mineral-rich province of Shaba, in southern Zaire.

The loss of Kindu Airport is a major setback for Kinshasa's demoralised forces, since the government can no longer launch air raids on positions held by the rebels in a vast swathe of eastern Zaire.

Before the armed forces were driven out of Kindu, they had a refuelling base for light fighter-bombers and powerful helicopters operating against the mainly Tutsi insurgents.

Sources in Kisangani, the capital of Haut Zaire province, said the rebels were approaching the tense city from four different directions, and were just 40 kilometres to the north.

Reports reaching Kinshasa in the far west said that government aircraft based at Kisangani could now be flown to Gbadolite, the northern Zairean village where President Mobutu Sese Seko usually resides and which has a large air base. Mr. Mobutu was Tuesday in France following medical tests and was not expected back in Zaire until next week.

Most Kisangani shops were shuttered Tuesday as troops set up vehicle checkpoints and searched pedestrians. On Monday, a false alarm spread panic and the central market emptied in minutes.

"We are starting to sweep towards Kisangani," Mr. Kabila said. "The town has the appearance of being well defended, but it will fall. We are unleashing our forces. Nobody can withstand us."

Mr. Kabila added that mercenaries were present in Kisangani. "More of them are black than white," he said, "notably Angolans and Togolese."

Sources here said that rebels had reached the town of Bengamisa, 40 kilometres to the north, after trekking through a forest from the east and taking Pirogues down the Lindi River.

U.N. and other sources say the rebels are also just 100 kilometres to the east of Kisangani, and they are also advancing on it from the northeast and the southeast.

Almost all expatriate relief workers fled Kisangani Saturday as some 160,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees streamed out of the Tingi-Tingi camp 250 kilometres to the southeast.

Some were trekking up the main road toward Kisangani and its minefields ahead of the rebels, truckdrivers said, but

the majority were believed to have bifurcated off to take a forest track to Ubundu, on the Zaire River.

Mr. Kabila renewed an appeal for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to help them and said: "In Tingi-Tingi, we saw dead and very weak people. We think the refugees will come to us to go back to Rwanda. On Sunday, 800 of those who fled returned to the camp."

They were among more than a million Hutu refugees from Rwanda and Burundi who settled in camps in eastern Zaire along their borders after fleeing ethnic strife in their own countries.

About 800,000 people went home when the rebels went on the offensive last October, but some 400,000 remain, fleeing ever deeper into Zaire ahead of the rebels, along with countless thousands of Zairean villagers.

Relief workers fly over the region in a bid to find them, but can do little to help those on the move, and say many are malnourished, weak and dying.

The Kenyan government announced Tuesday that a regional summit originally scheduled to be held in Nairobi on March 12 would now probably be held on March 19 and 20, but Mr. Kabila said he did not want to go either to Nairobi or Kinshasa.

"I'm against Kinshasa for security reasons. The authorities have no army to protect us. They just have armed gangs," he said. He also charged that Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi was biased in favour of Mr. Mobutu.

Mr. Kabila suggested that talks should be held in South Africa or Zimbabwe. "If it was Europe, Geneva would be okay," he added.

South Africa has been hosting preparatory talks aimed at ending the crisis.

The rebel leadership said Monday that Mr. Mobutu would have to step down before they signed any ceasefire.

In Paris, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan called for military intervention in Zaire if a ceasefire fails to take hold in the rebellion-hit east of the country to permit evacuation of tens of thousands of refugees.

In an interview to be published Wednesday by the weekly Jeune Afrique, Mr. Annan said that if the U.N. Security Council managed to impose "a durable ceasefire permitting the creation of a humanitarian corridor, we would have no need of armed intervention."

"If not, we would have to have recourse to this solution to evacuate and to save the refugees."

Mr. Annan revived the idea of a multinational force for Zaire last week. The U.N. chief said Tuesday the situation had changed, and the United Nations' response must change accordingly.

"Three months ago, when the question of a buffer force was posed for the first time, these states (Security Council members) told us they had seen no refugees in eastern Zaire."

"Today, the reappearance of tens of thousands of people in distress is obvious."

## South Korea selects popular new premier after scandal

SEOUL (R) — South Korean President Kim Young-Sam Tuesday chose as prime minister a man respected for integrity and plain living to help rescue him from a loans scandal, and even his opponents hailed the move.

Koh Kun, 59, was mayor of Seoul from 1988-90 under former President Roh Tae-Woo, but quit in a row with the administration over a corrupt land deal involving the same company — the Hanbo Group — that is now embarrassing Mr. Kim.

Mr. Koh currently is head of Myongji University. He succeeds Lee Soo-Sung, a legal scholar who was premier for 15 months before he was sacrificed to take responsibility for the scandal involving loans to failed Hanbo Steel Co.

Mr. Kim is purging top administration officials to try to restore his image in an election year. Three of his closest associates have been arrested in the Hanbo affair, which has shredded his reputation as an anti-graft crusader.

Mr. Kim apologised on Feb. 25 for the scandal and has replaced his chief secretary and three top Blue House aides. A cabinet reshuffle is widely expected Wednesday.

"President Kim believes Koh Kun is best suited for the job as he has a lot of administrative experience, integrity, a good personality and an ability to make friends," Blue House spokesman Yoon Yeo-Joon told reporters.

"He is the best choice Kim ever made," said Moon Chung-In, a political science professor at Yonsei University. "He is seen as a politically neutral person with managerial expertise who is respected by many."

Parliament voted overwhelmingly to approve Mr. Koh's nomination for what has become a revolving-door job in Mr. Kim's trouble-prone administration. Mr. Kim has discarded five premiers in four years.

The president is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term, but is anxious to bolster his prestige to give him greater leverage in choosing a suc-



South Korea's Koh Kun, the newly nominated prime minister, leaves his home in Seoul. President Kim Young-Sam appointed Mr. Koh Tuesday as part of a cabinet reshuffle in the wake of a loan scandal involving the insolvent Hanbo Steel Co. in which three close aides to Mr. Kim were indicted (Reuters photo)

cessor.

"We welcome the appointment" of Mr. Koh, said Park Hong-Yeop, a spokesman for the main opposition national congress for new politics. The party demanded Mr. Kim reveal the full truth behind the loans scandal that has led to 10 arrests, including Hanbo Group founder Chung Tae-Soo and top bankers.

Mr. Koh held cabinet posts during the 1980-1988 presidency of Chun Doo Hwan and took the university job in 1994. "I believe nobody has been named prime minister with a heavier heart than mine," Mr. Koh told reporters.

"But I have decided to accept the offer after much hesitation because I can't evade the responsibility of pulling our country through hard times."

His reputation for integrity stems from the earlier Hanbo scandal. He quit as Seoul mayor rather than bow to pressure and bend zoning rules to let a multi-million dollar property deal for Hanbo go ahead, political analysts said.

"Koh has spent such a long time in public office, yet has never been involved

## Muslim Uighurs say they bombed Chinese bus 'in revenge'

ALMATY (R) — An exiled spokesman for Uighur nationalists in western China said Tuesday his group had staged a bomb attack on a Chinese bus Monday in reprisal for Beijing government measures against the Muslim ethnic group.

Mukhlid Mukhlisi told Reuters in the nearby Kazakh capital Almaty he did not know how many victims there were in the attack. 120 kilometres east of Yining in Xinjiang province, Chinese officials have said seven people died and over 60 were hurt in three previous bus bomb attacks in the region last week.

"The explosion in the bus near the town of Kuldji (Yining) ... was our act of revenge for the crimes of the Chinese authorities," Mr. Mukhlisi, a prominent spokesman for the Uighur nationalist cause in exile, said.

He accused the Chinese police and army of killing 127 Uighurs and arresting hundreds more in a campaign against nationalists seeking an independent homeland, which he said was launched last month.

Mr. Mukhlisi said Chinese authorities were pursuing a deliberate policy of bringing in ethnic Han Chinese immigrants to Xinjiang and giving them favourable treatment over Uighurs.

"We intend to continue our struggle," he added.

Last week's time-bombs coincided with funeral rites for Beijing's political patriarch Deng Xiaoping and were the latest example of brewing unrest in the oil-rich region, where most of China's Turkic-speaking Uighurs live.

A spokesman for Uighur exiles in Russia, Sargari Tarym, said last week in Moscow: "We think that, in general, Deng's death will bring a power struggle within the Chinese elite. If that happens, the independence movement in Turkistan will intensify."



German riot policemen stand guard in front of the controversial shipment of waste nuclear fuel in Hitzacker near Dannenberg. Anti-nuclear activists had staged several protests along the train's route. Police deployed in Germany's biggest post-war security operations said up to 2,000 activists had defied a ban on demonstrations along the route (Reuters photo)

## Controversial German nuclear train arrives at destination

DANNENBERG, Germany (R) — A train carrying a controversial shipment of nuclear waste arrived at its destination in northern Germany Tuesday after being delayed for several hours by anti-nuclear activists.

The train, loaded with six containers of nuclear waste from southern Germany, arrived in the town of Dannenberg in the early hours of Tuesday after a 20-hour journey.

Around 5,000 demonstrators near the station greeted the train's arrival with boos and whistles.

Its cargo was due to be loaded on to trucks later Tuesday and then transported, probably Wednesday, to the Gorleben storage depot some 20 kilometres away.

Anti-nuclear activists had staged several protests along the train's route. Two demonstrators who dug holes under a railway track near Dannenberg and cemented their arms inside with 'quick-drying' cement caused the longest delay.

Police deployed in Germany's biggest post-war security operation said up to

2,000 activists had defied a ban on demonstrations along the route.

Militant protesters pelted riot police with stones. Other demonstrators played cat-and-mouse with police and border troops, disappearing when they arrived and then popping up to continue their obstruction.

Some activists set up burning barricades to block a road the truck convoy was expected to use. Others tunneled under other parts of the likely route to weaken the road structure. Police said it was possible one road would have to be closed.

The train set off from the southern town of Walheim early Monday, carrying waste from two German power stations and a French reprocessing plant, and made its way northwards across Germany during the day.

Some 30,000 police and border troops lined tracks along its route wearing riot helmets and carrying batons. Police helicopters circled overhead.

The security operation

will cost at least 66 million marks (\$39 million) and surpass the 46 million marks spent on bringing a smaller shipment to Gorleben last year.

The trucks due to carry the waste on the last leg of its journey from Dannenberg to Gorleben face a potentially difficult task. Thousands of activists have camped at Gorleben awaiting the shipment's arrival.

Police said Monday that in general the protests had been peaceful so far but local government officials condemned them.

"Digging under roads has nothing to do with peaceful opposition," said Ulrike Wolff-Gebhardt, head of a town council to the Dannenberg area.

Greens party leader Gunda Roestel told Saar Radio her party valued the protests as "a symbol against atomic energy policy" and called for peaceful resistance.

"There is only one alternative for the (government's energy) concept — to abolish atomic power in the face of popular protest," Ms. Roestel said.

## China launches scathing attack on U.S. human rights record

BEIJING (AFP) — China launched a scathing attack on the U.S. human rights record Tuesday in revenge for a U.S. report which accused Beijing of intolerance and widespread human rights abuses.

The lengthy riposte, carried by Xinhua News Agency, accused the United States of racial genocide, gross abuses in prisons and failing to prevent terrorism and violent crime.

"U.S. prisons are permeated with hostility and have become places that breed violence, rape and disease," it said.

"Inmates are sometimes forced to fight among themselves and are whipped. Many are locked up in separate cells all year round while others are handcuffed and fettered and have to crawl on the floor to eat and lick their plates like dogs," it added.

The comments came as Beijing again reaffirmed its refusal to allow the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit its prisons.

China's fury was in reaction to the State Department report which said Jan. 30 that Beijing continued to commit widespread human rights abuses "stemming from the authorities' intolerance of dissent, fear of unrest and continuing absence of laws protecting basic freedoms."

Without any apparent irony, the report then accused the U.S. government of failing to prevent terrorist attacks such as those in the World Trade Centre, Oklahoma, and the Olympics without mentioning China's own spate of terrorist attacks in northwestern Xinjiang.

"It is not accidental that terrorist bomb attacks continuously occur in the United States, as it is an excessively violent country where terrorism is deeply rooted in society," the report said.

It went on to slam the United States for racial genocide against the American Indians, although similar charges are launched at Beijing for its treatment of Tibetans.

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After attacking the U.S. record on racial and sexual discrimination, its use of nuclear weapons, widespread sale of conventional weapons and disposal of waste, the report also accused Washington of failing to represent a democracy.

"The American democracy is a moneybag democracy. It is only a democracy for the rich and the U.S. so-called general election reflects neither the will of the people as a whole nor the majority," it said, quoting extensively from the ongoing debate in the United States about the cost of running for president.

"The United States has a very poor human rights record in the world today," it concluded.

China frequently attacks the United States for criticizing its record on civil liberties and argues that its record is better now than at any time in the past.

## Ex-CIA man pleads guilty of spying

WASHINGTON (R) — Harold Nicholson, the highest ranking Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officer convicted of espionage, pleaded guilty Monday to conspiring to sell highly classified national security secrets to Russia.

In a plea agreement, Mr. Nicholson, 46, admitted to spying for Moscow since June 1994, when he was the CIA's deputy chief of station for operations in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

He was the second national security official to cut a deal on charges of selling out their country in three days. On Friday, a former Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) counterintelligence agent, Earl Edwin Pitts, 43, pleaded guilty to

selling secrets to Moscow from 1987 to 1992, also in exchange for cash.

Under Mr. Nicholson's deal with prosecutors, he could spend as little as 20 years in prison if U.S. Officials certify his promised full cooperation in gauging the harm done by his sell-out and if he gets time off for good behaviour.

U.S. District Judge James Cacheris set June 5 for sentencing after ensuring that Mr. Nicholson, a 16-year veteran of the CIA's clandestine Operations Directorate, was entering his plea voluntarily and fully understood the consequences.

The agreement required Mr. Nicholson to forfeit the \$180,000 he admitted receiving from Russia's

SVRR intelligence service, the successor to the Soviet-era KGB, for the 2 1/2 year conspiracy that ended with his Nov. 16 arrest.

Among the secrets Mr. Nicholson admitted selling were the names and planned assignments abroad of new undercover CIA officers he helped train in spy craft at the CIA field school known as Camp Peary, Virginia.

Mr. Nicholson also admitted giving Russia a document summarising information obtained during the debriefing of CIA turncoat Aldrich Ames, who pleaded guilty in 1994 to selling Moscow secrets from 1985 to 1994 for more than \$2.5 million.

## East German guards 'sorry' for wall killing

BERLIN (R) — Two former East German border guards said they were sorry at their trial Monday for the 1962 killing of Peter Fechter, who was shot and bled to death at the Berlin Wall as his cries for help went unheeded.

The 17-year-old Fechter, an East German mason, was shot in the pelvis while trying to climb over the Berlin Wall near an allied checkpoint. He called in vain for help for about 50 minutes as he slowly bled to death.

"I was assigned to do my duty at the border and the only thing I can say is that I am sorry about it all," said Rolf Friedrich, 61, one of two guards facing manslaughter and attempted manslaughter charges for the killing of Fechter and for shooting at a friend who escaped over the Berlin Wall.

Erich Schreiber, 55, told the court filled with journalists and a gallery of spectators that included Fechter's sister Ruth, that he too regretted the shooting which became the most famous and widely condemned slaying at the Berlin Wall.

"What else can I say except that I am also very sorry about it," said Mr. Schreiber, who prosecutors said fired 17 shots from his machine gun at Fechter as he ran towards the wall. "But I cannot change anything now. It happened."

Fechter's anguished screams were ignored by the East German border guards, although West Berlin Police and Western allies tried vainly to help him by tossing first aid kits over the Wall. Because Fechter was on Soviet-controlled East Berlin territory, West Berlin Police said they could not intervene.

Hundreds of people gathered on the Western side of the Wall, who heard Fechter's cries, shouted "murderers, murderers" at the East German border guards.

The horrifying accounts of Fechter's death and dramatic pictures of East German Police carrying his limp body away from the wall were published around the world and prompted widespread condemnation of the Wall and the East German regime.

Berlin's mayor placed a wreath of flowers each year on Aug. 17 — the date of Fechter's killing — at a cross next to the spot at the wall where he was shot.

Although the identities of the guards were long concealed even in Communist East Germany, which generally rewarded guards who shot refugees with pay and holiday bonuses, prosecutors launched an investigation in 1993 to find the names.

Prosecutors are expected to tell the court that Fechter and Helmut Kulbeik had been planning to flee for about five months. Both were working at a construction site in East Berlin on Aug. 17, 1962.

During their lunch break they hid in a building near the Wall, burying themselves in a pile of sawdust before their dash to the wall at a point just a few hundred metres from Checkpoint Charlie crossing point.

Fechter climbed through a window in the East Berlin building, jumped over a line of barbed wire and ran towards the Wall. He was just 10 metres from it when a bullet from a machine gun hit him.

Prosecutors accuse the border guards of firing without warning Fechter. Mr. Kulbeik managed to climb over the wall unhurt. He said Fechter "stood still as if roots had grown on his feet" and leaned with his back against the wall as he was trying to protect himself from any more shots fired.

كيسانجاني



# World News

## Albanian town defies Berisha with shadow government

SARANDE, Albania (AFP) — Residents of this southern town said Tuesday they were forming their own city government in defiance of President Sali Berisha.

In a rally in the town square, representatives of political parties said they would form a city council which they said would replace the one led by the current mayor, Capajev Zeri, close to Mr. Berisha's Democratic Party.

"We are going to organize the structures of the city ourselves and we will become an example for all of Albania," one of the speakers at the rally of more than 3,000 people said.

Sarande, population 15,000, is a resort town 50 kilometers from the Greek border. It is among the Albanian towns torn by rioting over the collapse of pyramid investment schemes.

The rioters have been in control since Sunday after torching the police station, court and headquarters of the secret police.

They also stole weapons from the police armory and since then youths wearing masks have roamed the streets firing into the air with military-style assault rifles and machine pistols.

In the early hours of Tuesday, a taxi driver was fatally hit by gunfire as he was driving two fares to the Greek border, one of his colleagues told AFP.

One of the speakers at Tuesday's rally was Alun Kambiri, well-known in town for the many years he spent in prison when Enver Hoxha was Albania's Communist dictator.

He appealed to the crowd for "calm, peace and responsibility" — but added: "If we must die for Sarande, then we will die together — and I would like to be the first to perish."

Mr. Berisha, Mr. Kambiri said, was "the most fanatical of Hoxha's secretaries."

Since Sunday, dozens of teenagers — often masked — have been gleefully shooting into their air with their stolen ak-47 rifles and automatic pistols.

"Children younger than 14 must turn in their weapons in to their parents," one speaker at Tuesday's rally pleaded.

A small Albanian Navy minesweeper stationed at Sarande has also fallen into rebellious hands. It was seen Monday anchored in the harbour, firing its cannon from time to time.

Each salvo was greeted from land by a symphony of gunfire. Unconfirmed reports in town also tell of mobs seizing an artillery battery, high on a hill that overlooks the harbour.

"Whatever happens, we are ready to defend ourselves,"

one resident said.

At the only hotel in Sarande still open for business, an employee points to the troubles in the nearby Adriatic port of Vlore, where the government has also lost control.

"Berisha is sending tanks to Vlore," he said. "He will then send them also to Sarande."

Sarande's population has shrunk by thousands in recent years as many upped and left for Greece. Those who remain fear for the worst to come.

In Brussels, European Union (EU) governments Tuesday began urgent consultations aimed at agreeing on a common response to events in Albania amid fears they could be facing a re-run of the Bosnian refugee crisis.

At the insistence of Greece and Italy, the EU countries in the frontline should the current state of emergency result in a mass exodus, senior officials from EU foreign ministries will meet in Brussels Thursday to discuss the scope for joint action.

"It is important that we act quickly to give a political signal that the EU is committed to cooperative action to help Albania solve its internal problems," an Italian Foreign Ministry official said.

Brussels diplomats however acknowledged that the EU had few options available to it as it attempts to contain yet another destabilising crisis in its Balkan backyard.

"We can help, we can give guidance but in the end the responsibility lies with the Albanians," one said. "They have to sort themselves out."

On the agenda for Thursday's meeting will be the issue of whether EU aid to Albania, which plays a critical role in the economy of Europe's poorest country, should continue in light of the government's authoritarian response to weeks of civil unrest.

Albania has received 450 million ECUs (\$520 million) in aid from the EU in the last five years to help build roads, hospitals and links with the outside world after years of Communist isolation.

EU aid last year accounted for a third of the country's budget. There is a precedent for a suspension of aid. Payments to Croatia were put on hold in August 1995 following Zagreb's onslaught against rebel Serbs in Krajina.

In the case of Albania however this is seen as an unlikely outcome.

Louise Van Der Laan, a spokeswoman for EU External Affairs Commissioner Hans Van Den Broek, said a



Albanians shoot their automatic rifles in the air from the back of a truck during protests in the southern Albanian town of Vlore. The Albanian government declared a state of emergency and warned armed insurgents in the south that unless they surrender their weapons they would be shot without warning (Reuters photo)

suspension of aid would be "extremely problematic."

"We need to send a political signal that what is happening is not acceptable but suspending aid will hit exactly the people we are trying to help."

Another option that has been floated is an increase in aid to help fund or organise a compensation scheme for Albanians who have lost their life savings in fraudulent savings schemes — the issue that sparked the unrest that has resulted in the current crisis.

Italian sources said Rome was sympathetic to this approach, if it could be agreed at a multilateral level. But British officials were skeptical. "I can't see any enthusiasm for a bail-out scheme," one source said.

There is however expected to be agreement on sending an

Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission to Albania to assess the situation.

OSCE secretary general Niels Helveg Petersen called Tuesday for an international effort to halt the violence and unrest.

"The situation is truly disturbing and worsening," he said. "There is a need for big international efforts to break the vicious circle of violence and instability."

The commission meanwhile said it had reviewed plans for an emergency evacuation of its staff in Albania although it emphasised that they were not yet in danger.

"An evacuation plan is ready but for the time being we have no reason to believe we will have to implement it," said a spokeswoman.

## Fighting displaces 36,000 in north Afghanistan

KABUL (R) — Recent fighting in the northeastern Afghan province of Badkhis has displaced 36,000 people, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Tuesday.

The fighting which is continuing in the province of Badkhis has displaced more than 4,000 families (24,000 people) towards the city of Herat since October, says an ICRC document released in Kabul Tuesday.

Following recent confrontations, 2,000 more families are newly in need. These families are dispersed in the province of Badkhis

and around the provincial capital Qala-e-Naw, says the document.

Forces of the purist Islamic Taliban, who hold Qala-e-Naw and Herat, are facing fighters loyal to the opposition alliance along a bitterly disputed front line that runs through the province of Badkhis.

Despite frequent reports of heavy fighting in the area, with both sides launching attacks, there are no reliable reports of a change in the front line.

The document says that the ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society have started registering and as-

sisting the displaced.

"The ICRC have started assistance for the displaced of Badkhis. Two ICRC teams, in collaboration with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, have undertaken the registration of displaced families in need of aid."

This aid, about 200 tonnes, consists of food, blankets and plastic sheeting, says the document.

It says that five trucks have already left Herat for Qala-e-Naw in anticipation of future distributions.

Recent reports from the United Nations Refugee Agency say there also have been significant numbers of

people displaced by fighting to the mountainous central region of Afghanistan.

The reports say that the displaced were fleeing over the mountains from fighting close to the Ghorband valley.

The Taliban, who captured Kabul Sept. 27, are trying to impose their strict form of Islam across the country and control 75 per cent of Afghanistan.

They are fighting an opposition alliance comprised of forces of the ousted government, northern military leader Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum and Shi'ite Muslim leader Karim Khalili.

## Blast near Sri Lanka leader's home kills 1

COLOMBO (R) — An explosion near the official holiday home of Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga killed one person Monday, police said.

They said the blast occurred about 250 metres from the entrance of the house at 2.30 p.m. (0830 GMT) in the central hill country town of Nuwara Eliya.

Mrs. Kumaratunga was in Nuwara Eliya for an election meeting but was not in the house at the time of the explosion, they said.

"We have taken into custody a 16-year-old student," a police official told Reuters by telephone from Nuwara Eliya, the colonial-style resort and capital of the country's tea industry, 105 kilometres east of Colombo.

The official, who declined to be identified, said the victim was also a student, around the same age as the detainee and from the same local school.

He said no one else was hurt by the blast and there was no damage to the surrounding area.

"From the extent of the damage, we presume the blast occurred from an exploding grenade. But investigations are continuing. We are interrogating the suspect in custody," the official said.

"The (election) meeting went on without any problem. There were no disturbances. The president managed to deliver her address and she left by helicopter soon after," the official said.

It was not immediately known whether Mrs. Kumaratunga had stayed on in Nuwara Eliya or had returned to Colombo.

Mrs. Kumaratunga has been addressing a series of election meetings across the country before local government polls scheduled for March 21.

Police have said they fear increased violence before the polls and warned political parties of possible attacks at election rallies.

The Centre for Monitoring Election Violence said at the weekend that nearly 500 incidents of election-related violence, mostly threats against candidates and their supporters, had been reported up to Friday.

## Probe begins into Pakistan train disaster amid fears of sabotage

MULTAN, Pakistan (AFP) — Officials opened an inquiry Tuesday into a train crash that claimed 126 lives in central Pakistan amid speculation the tragedy may have been due to sabotage.

Railway authorities expressed fears that Monday's accident, the worst in the country since a 1991 train collision in which 254 people were killed, may have been deliberately caused.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after visiting the crash site ordered an inquiry saying those responsible will not go unpunished.

"Saboteurs and terrorists will be dealt with with an iron hand," Mr. Sharif said, adding that any attempt to weaken Pakistan would fail.

Mr. Sharif assured relatives of those killed in the crash that they would receive compensation and there would be financial assistance for the injured.

The railway administration separately announced payment of 100,000 rupees (\$2,500) for the heirs of each person killed, and 10,000 rupees (\$250) for the injured.

A railway official earlier said a much worse tragedy was averted by diverting the train after the brakes failed.

The express was on a collision course with another passenger train steaming into the rural station from the opposite direction, he said.

"Were the train not diverted, a much bigger disaster would have taken place," said Sardar Saifullah Qaisrani, superintendent of railways in the Khanewal region.

The Zulfikar express was one of the main trains which run regularly from the country's northern Peshawar city to the southern tip of Karachi. Most of the victims came from the northern districts.

Railway authorities have made special arrangements to return the bodies to their homes, and provide free travel passes so the injured can be visited in hospital by their families.

A Pakistan military C-130 aircraft flew some of the bodies to Peshawar while others were transported by train and trucks for burial in their home towns.

A railway official earlier

## Senators move to block Mexico-drugs decision

WASHINGTON (R) — Senate critics of Mexico's anti-drug efforts began a campaign Monday to overturn President Bill Clinton's certification that Mexico is an ally in the war against narcotics.

Members of both parties introduced resolutions to disapprove Mr. Clinton's action and also to allow the president to suspend resulting sanctions against Mexico on grounds of U.S. national interests.

Mr. Clinton's decision to give Mexico a passing grade in its anti-drug war reflected concern among administration officials that decertification would cause such ill-will it would make future anti-narcotics cooperation even more difficult.

Mexico is linked to the United States by the North

American Free Trade Agreement and is its third largest trading partner.

However, Mexican drug groups control much of the U.S.-bound cocaine traffic and congressional calls for its decertification intensified after the officer in charge of the anti-drug war, Gen. Jesus Gutierrez Rebollo, was accused of taking bribes from a drug kingpin.

If both the Senate and House pass a decertification resolution it then goes to Mr. Clinton who could veto it. Both houses of Congress would then be required to muster a two-thirds majority to override the veto.

Decertification without a waiver would bar most bilateral U.S. aid to Mexico as well as government-backed guarantees to firms exporting to Mexico or investing

there. It would also require the U.S. to vote against Mexican requests for loans from the World Bank or Inter-American Development Bank.

Three Senate resolutions were introduced by Paul Coverdell, a Georgia Republican, and Democrat Dianne Feinstein of California.

Two called for straight disapproval and one added that Mr. Clinton could waive the sanctions for this fiscal year, ending on Sept. 30.

"We're trying to preserve our options," an aide to Sen. Coverdell said.

In the house, Representative Benjamin Gilman, a New York Republican, said he had called a meeting of his international relations committee Thursday to consider a resolution of disapproval.

Forty senators last week signed a Feinstein letter to Mr. Clinton calling on him to decertify Mexico, with a waiver if necessary.

Sen. Coverdell told the Senate that Mr. Clinton's action last week was an endorsement of an "unacceptable" situation.

He said that flatly certifying Mexico as a drug ally "misleads both nations (and) suggests we just need to keep doing what we have been doing."

The aide, who asked not to be identified, acknowledged that it was "tough" to override the president on a foreign policy issue. Congress has so far not disapproved any presidential drug certification of a foreign country.

## Japan quake swarm may mean volcanic activity

TOKYO (R) — More than 2,500 small earthquakes have jolted a Japanese sea-side and spa resort south of Tokyo over the past 48 hours, including two tremors which may signal volcanic activity, the Meteorological Agency said Tuesday.

The strongest so far measured 5.6 on the Richter Scale and came at 12.57 p.m. (0357 GMT) Tuesday and shook Tokyo as well as the Ito area.

The agency also reported two "low-frequency earthquakes," which could indicate undersea volcanic activity, Tuesday morning.

"Volcanic activity is not always the cause of these low-frequency tremors, but they did occur just before a submarine volcano erupted there in 1989," an agency seismologist said.

A small underwater eruption off Ito in 1989 caused a tremor measuring 5.5 on the Richter Scale but no damage.

The agency said it dispatched a specialist team of seismologists and volcanologists to the region to step

up monitoring activity.

One of the stronger tremors late Monday triggered a small landslide which destroyed a warehouse. A dozen water and gas mains were severed, police said.

Several local residents were evacuated to a city hall, police said. Ito, a city of 72,000 people, is famous for hot springs and seafood.

Local rail authorities said they took precautionary measures to halt rail services Tuesday.

The Chinese exercises were seen as an attempt to intimidate pro-independence sentiment here ahead of Taiwan's first direct presidential elections last March.

China has accused Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui of promoting independence.

## Taiwan to stage drills including live missile firings

TAIPEI (AFP) — Taiwan is to resume military exercises in March and April, including live missile firings, after suspending war games last year to avoid a confrontation with China, the military announced Tuesday.

Two separate live-fire missile tests will be held from March 12 to April 8 in the Shen Chien Number 37

drills in northern Taiwan, military spokesman Major General Kung Fan-Ding told a press conference.

Two Hawk surface-to-air missiles would be fired in each test, he said.

Another war game dubbed "Hua Shan" would be staged in central Taiwan from March 22 to March 28.

But Gen. Kung down-

played the significance of the exercises, saying they were "part of the routine practice" of the armed forces and asked the public "not to harbour unnecessary speculation."

The nationalist island put a hold on its major military exercises last year after China staged six rounds of war games including live mis-

sile tests in the Taiwan Strait.

The Chinese exercises were seen as an attempt to intimidate pro-independence sentiment here ahead of Taiwan's first direct presidential elections last March.

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## Tories, Labour elbow for initiative on juvenile crime

LONDON (AFP) — In the run-up to British general elections, the Conservative government and poll-leading Labour opposition are scrambling for ground

on this week on the fertile new campaign field of juvenile crime.

Horrific murders in recent years by pre-teens, and escalating vandalism and kidnap crime nationwide, have engendered growing demands for crackdown and reform in juvenile justice seen by many as more coddling than punitive.

The calls have not gone unnoticed, either by the Tories, desperate to extend their 18-year reign, or Labour, just as anxious to make them redundant.

Heavily favored in the elections expected on May 1, Labour fired the opening salvo Monday by proposing stark change in juvenile law, including scrapping the old and sacrosanct tenet that children aged 10-13 are "incapable of evil."

"This doctrine defies common sense," shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw said as he campaigned in a high-crime area of northern England. "Most young peo-

ple aged 10-13 are clearly capable of knowing the difference between right and wrong."

That shot effectively stole thunder from a "green paper" that Home Secretary Michael Howard was set to launch Tuesday proposing tough sanctions, not only against delinquent children, but their parents as well.

(A green paper in British politics is a preliminary report of government proposals, meant for discussion.)

But the proposals, which would include curfews to control children as young as five, were drawing criticism by civil liberties groups even before they were officially unveiled.

Under the proposals, children under 10 who fall into crime would be targeted by special family counsellors.

Parents failing to control their children could face court sanctions, electronic tagging of their children and fines up to £1,000 (\$1,600).

"Crime diversion groups" made up of social workers, teachers, police, health experts and volunteers would investigate the background of child offenders and give

their parents tough take-it-or-leave-it advice ranging from diet to discipline.

If parents refuse to cooperate, they could themselves be hauled into youth courts and put under a new "parental control order," according to the green paper widely reported in the British press.

But Labour's proposal for discarding the centuries-old "age-of-evil" doctrine was seen as the more controversial.

"We want an end to this medieval law which says youngsters 10-13 can do no evil," said Mr. Straw.

"I think the present situation is frankly mad. Kids get the idea they can get away with things and then at 15 or 16 they get into real trouble."

Mr. Straw heard residents in the northern England community of Newark complain of a band of youths under 14 who were terrorising their community with virtual impunity from criminal prosecution.

"Sadly, communities ... know from bitter experience of the government's failure to tackle youth crime and disorder," Mr. Straw said.



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## Unity against obstinacy

U.S. PRESIDENT Bill Clinton's comment on Israel's recent decision to construct thousands of housing units on Jabal Abu Ghneim may have sounded soft but their meaning can be deep. In welcoming Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Washington Monday for talks on the troubled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), President Clinton's choice of words could not have escaped the attention and concern of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. "I would have preferred the decision not have been made because I don't think it builds confidence," the U.S. president said in a carefully crafted statement.

Netanyahu, on the other hand, remains defiant. In a nationally televised comment on Monday, he arrogantly declared that no one may dictate to Israel where it can or cannot build in Jerusalem, that if anyone believes that Israel will withdraw from most of the West Bank they will be deeply disappointed and that the creation of an Arab state in the "land of Israel" is out of the question. The Israeli leader's words and acts of defiance can be explained in part by his domestic woes in the wake of the so-called Bar-On scandal. The prime minister needs all the support he can muster, apologists for him say, to defeat his opponents and frustrate attempts to unseat him from power in the aftermath of growing evidence that he could be implicated in the crisis over the appointment of Bar-On as the attorney general. Netanyahu is trying desperately to look more hawkish than ever to consolidate his grip on power as well as his control over his Likud Party, the apologists maintain.

But be that as it may, it is still amateurish for Netanyahu, if not downright cheapish, to use such slogans and epithets at this sensitive and critical time in the peace process. He must remember, if indeed his declared position is not his government's last word on the future of negotiations with the Palestinians, that his country needs to make peace with another party, the Arabs, if what is at stake is Israel's existence, acceptance and strategic interests. The Arabs, Netanyahu and the whole Israeli right-wing movement should know, will not understand or accept such positions, even if they were made purely for internal consumption. Inflamed rhetoric, on its own, is capable of taking us backwards, foment violence and pave the way to more instability and perhaps war.

The Americans understand this equation very well. And so do the Europeans, who seem to be convinced that Netanyahu's address to his Likud Party is not, cannot be, his bottom line. Visiting with us here in Amman yesterday and today are two distinguished representatives of Europe, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and European special envoy to the Middle East Miguel Angel Moratinos, who want to join hands with the Americans in an effort to build on the Hebron agreement between Netanyahu and Arafat and who, like the Americans, want to influence the system of checks and balances in the peace process as diplomatically and quietly as possible.

The Clinton administration has an interest in reserving for the Europeans a special role to play in keeping the process alive especially in such times of difficulty as we are passing through now. Not the least in sending Netanyahu a subtle message that his government will have to face pressure from every corner of the world if it presses with obstinacy and recalcitrance in negotiations with the Palestinians and also with the Syrians and Lebanese.

Likewise the Europeans can and have to help with the effort to build on peace, where it has been and is hoped to be achieved, thereby helping Israel itself to make the right choice.

To this end, Jordan, which has done everything possible towards reaching comprehensive and durable peace in the region, welcomes and encourages greater European involvement in both peace-making and peace-building, alongside that of the Americans, which has to be vital.

## ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER for Al Ra'i daily expressed pessimism over U.S. President Clinton's response to President Arafat's call on him to prevent Israel from establishing a new settlement near Arab Jerusalem. Writing Tuesday under the pen name Meem, the columnist said Mr. Clinton's remark that he would have preferred the Israeli decision not to have been taken does not serve any purpose. Neither does Mr. Clinton's call on the Palestinians and the Israelis to refrain from committing any acts of violence prevent any confrontations in the occupied Palestinian lands as a result of Israel's illegal actions, added the writer. Of course President Arafat has demanded that Clinton interfere and stop the Israeli measures, but the U.S. is not expected to do anything of this kind simply because Israel is America's strategic ally in our region. He said through his behaviour the U.S. is not eligible to be an arbiter or mediator between the two sides and it is a foregone conclusion that the U.S. will continue to provide Israel with all the military and economic means it needs to ensure its military supremacy over the Arab Nation and ensure its continued intransigence and disregard of Arab rights.

## The Washington Watch

# Arafat's visit to U.S. — 'an opportunity to shape American political discourse on issues of concern to the Palestinians'

By Dr. James Zogby

PRESIDENT ARAFAT'S visit to Washington leads off a month of visits by Arab heads of state. He will be followed one week later by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and then one week later by King Hussein.

The Palestinian leader's visit will be his most extensive to the U.S. In four days he will visit three U.S. cities and participate in a number of official meetings and public and private events.

This is President Arafat's sixth trip to the U.S., but it is the first that comes at the formal invitation of the U.S. president. Hence, this visit is the first in which the Palestinian leader will be accorded full Washington honours. He will meet with the president, vice president and the secretaries of state and commerce. There will be a private State Department luncheon with the secretary of state, the director of AID and Ambassador Dennis Ross.

Separate meetings have also been arranged with the leadership of both the Senate and House of Representatives as well. Mr. Arafat's public appearances include: a dinner hosted by the Arab American community leadership, a "Newsmaker Breakfast" for the U.S. media hosted by the National Press Club, a business luncheon hosted by the Palestinian Economic Development and Investment Corporation (PEDICO) and the Washington-based Builders of Peace, a speech before the membership of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York City, a gala reception at the United Nations, and a major foreign policy address at the James Baker Centre in Houston, Texas.

Private events include: a ceremony at which President Arafat and the wife of the late Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown will receive a plaque dedicating the planned Marriott business centre in Gaza in Mr. Brown's name (Mr. Arafat will also award posthumously to Secretary Brown the Star of Palestine, the highest Palestinian award); a private dinner for Washington notables (White House officials, senators and congressmen) hosted by Washington businessman Hani Masri; meetings in Houston and New York City with former President George Bush, former Secretary of State James Baker, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, and a number of prominent U.S. Jewish leaders.

Mr. Arafat will also make a number of major media appearances including the Larry King Show carried internationally on CNN. This is how an Arab head of state visit should be done — maximum exposure for maximum impact. And it comes at just the right time.

President Clinton will receive President Arafat at the White House and praise the constructive and statesmanlike role he has played since the September Washington summit. Mr. Clinton will express continuing U.S. support for Mr. Arafat and acknowledge his contributions to peace. The U.S. president will also use the occasion of this visit to formally launch the U.S.-Palestinian commission that was first discussed between the two leaders one year ago.

The reception given to Mr. Arafat and the creation of the commission are concrete expressions of the growing partnership between the U.S. and the Palestinians — a development unthinkable just five years ago.

For his part, President Arafat will praise the leadership of the U.S., especially commending the role played by President Clinton in convening the September Washington summit. Mr. Arafat will also raise a number of critical concerns. Most pressing among the issues he will raise is the threat to Palestinian security, well-being and aspirations posed by the recent decision by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to build a new settlement compound in Jabal Abu Ghneim.

While settlements and road building on Palestinian land are always problematic, the Abu Ghneim effort is particularly onerous because it threatens to complete the encirclement of Jerusalem by Jewish settlements, effectively shutting the expanded city borders from the rest of the West Bank.

Mr. Arafat will address this issue to the U.S. president and emphasise the political dangers it presents to the peace process and the Palestinian community.

Of critical concern as well to the Palestinian president will be the continued economic hardships endured by the Palestinian people. Closure and the impediments to normal economic activity created by Israeli policies will be a prime topic of discussion in both private meetings and public events. Mr. Arafat knows that if the now long-term unemployment rate of 50-60 per cent in the West Bank and Gaza are not reversed there is little hope for sustaining the peace process.

While recent comments by Clinton administration officials indicate U.S. sympathy with the Palestinians on both the Abu Ghneim settlement issue and the issue of the Palestinian economy, Mr.

Arafat will no doubt ask that sympathy be translated into concrete assistance to change both issues.

With the administration, President Arafat will find a supportive partner, however, when the president of Palestine goes before Congress, he will encounter some opposition and even hostility.

Congressional opposition comes from a diverse group — those who, for a variety of personal and philosophical reasons, never accepted any recognition of the Palestinians as partners in the peace process and those who, for political reasons, seek to accommodate pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian attitudes of their hardline Jewish or Christian fundamentalist constituents.

For weeks now this group has been collecting signatures on a congressional letter to President Arafat urging him to honour his commitments to Israel. Specifically, they call on him to "complete the process of revising the Palestinian National Charter, combat terrorism and prevent violence; limit the size of the Palestinian police; and limit the exercise and location of Palestinian government activities."

They end the letter with a warning that they "will, of course, be closely watching the implementation of the aforementioned commitments."

At last count the letter had 149 endorsers — which is actually surprisingly low for an anti-Palestinian initiative in Congress. It is even interesting to note that the tone of this letter is more cordial and diplomatic than previous congressional efforts. Nevertheless, implicit in this letter is a threat to withhold the meagre \$75 million in

annual U.S. assistance to the Palestinians unless Mr. Arafat complies with their interpretation of his obligations. In effect, this is a U.S. version of the one-sided Likud notion of reciprocity, i.e., the Palestinians must comply, but not the Israelis. It is important to note that the administration has repeatedly rejected these congressional initiatives.

Despite a few such rough spots, the Arafat visit promises to be a successful endeavour. On an official level, it brings the Palestinians to the highest level yet of official recognition. Placing the Arafat visit on a par with visits by Mr. Netanyahu, Mr. Mubarak, and King Hussein, and by establishing a vehicle to develop U.S.-Palestinian bilateral ties, while not yet establishing full recognition of Palestinian statehood, comes close to such recognition.

Mr. Arafat's extensive exposure to U.S. public opinion and leaders also presents an extraordinary opportunity for him to shape U.S. political discourse on key issues of concern to the future of the Palestinian people. An intense focus on economic issues also promises to provide an important opportunity for Palestinians to make considerable breakthroughs in this area.

The peace process may be lagging behind in performance and Israeli behaviour may be creating new provocations and hardships, but by building strong U.S. public support and developing personal ties with U.S. leaders, Mr. Arafat's visit can enhance the long-term effort to produce a more supportive U.S. role in the search for a just and balanced Middle East peace.

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## NATO enlargement would backfire on the West

By Mikhail Gorbachev

MOSCOW — OF NATO we must speak again. Even if it isn't clear from the current debate, the alliance's expansion could bring us all to a no-win situation.

What is clear is that no one has reflected sufficiently or responsibly on the consequences of this plan.

In Russia, NATO expansion has become an acute internal problem. Raising the spectre of an external threat is an old trick, often used by leaders to consolidate nationalistic feelings and to assure themselves a more or less trouble-free stay in power. But leave aside the cynical motives of those who would use NATO expansion for their own ends: the idea itself is a real danger — and not only for Russia.

During the cold war, arms manufacturers and merchants of hate decided the destiny of the world. Immense efforts were required to break a fatal logic that was dragging humanity towards suicide.

Seven years have passed since the end of the cold war, but its poisonous roots live on, infecting economies, international relations, nations' internal politics and the moral and psychological health of millions of people.

And yet, the leaders of countries that are even more civilised, cultured and democratic than their predecessors of 50 years ago are creating a situation in which human survival could again be threatened.

Security motives are used to explain the expansion of NATO. But security in which areas? Certainly the world has many problems — ecological, demographic, economic, among others — but these are not solved by military blocs. These are global emergencies, affecting everyone, while military blocs exist to act against someone else.

So against whom is a bigger NATO directed? We are told it is directed against no one but is necessary for the security of Europe. We are told that no one is threatening Russia, and even

that NATO expansion would be useful to Russia. But why then are investigations under way on the territories of prospective NATO members to determine how and where to best station new military structures?

The issue of placing nuclear weapons in the bloc's new member states is being discussed at government levels.

Furthermore, along the perimeter of Russia — from the Balkans to Moldova and Ukraine and beyond the Caucasus to Central Asia — "security knots" are being woven in which there is no room for Russia. Nothing could be more effective in reviving the Russian complex of being "surrounded."

And how is it that each small step taken to revive economic relations between Russia and the states of the former Soviet Union is immediately interpreted as indicating an imperial Russian appetite? The sentiment of Messrs. Kissinger and Brzezinski is back in fashion: that Russia is incorrigible and can be talked to only from a position of strength.

Such an atmosphere, despite all the reassurances that Russian interests and anxieties will be taken into account, is not conducive to trust.

How can it not be widely known that Russia poses no danger to anyone, either by its intentions or its capacity? And even if a real danger did arise, NATO would certainly not neutralise it from Estonia or Uzbekistan; there are other areas much better suited for such operations.

It is impossible to understand how well-informed politicians do not realise that their stubbornness will only cause problems in the future — and not in the distant future, either. NATO expansion would transform Russian society into an antagonist hostile to the West.

Instead of increasing security, NATO expansion would cause an increase in threats, and not only in Europe.

over, again and again. I understand that face must be saved. But there is still time. It is perhaps strange that neither Russia nor the West has tried to put the matter on the agenda of the U.N. Security Council. We are talking, after all, about a global problem.

There are other ideas worth discussing, such as France's proposal for a summit meeting. It is possible to envision an agree-

ment that would provide joint guarantees by NATO and Russia to those European countries seeking membership in the Atlantic alliance.

Serious negotiation is possible before NATO expansion is declared a fait accompli at its summit meeting in July.

It is worth trying everything before leaving as an inheritance to the 21st century such a tragic gift.

Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union and a Nobel Peace Prize winner, now heads the Gorbachev Foundation, a political think tank in Moscow, and writes a monthly column for La Stampa, a newspaper in Turin. This column is reprinted from the New York Times.

## LETTERS

### Latin America's misery

To the Editor:

STATISTICS SHOW that 44.9 per cent of Latin Americans are poor; in other words, 190.5 million people living in poverty. And the prospects for this year are an increase in the gap between rich and poor. And an increase in hunger and the number of undernourished people.

A survey carried out in 17 Latin American countries by the press agency DPA reveals that the level of poverty in Central America is very high, particularly in Nicaragua (80 per cent), Guatemala (75.5 per cent) and Honduras (75 per cent). Poverty is also high in Mexico, where it reaches 70 per cent.

The average salary in the region is \$134.90 per month. But figures are lower in nine of the 17 surveyed countries, with extremes like Venezuela, where the average is \$31, and Bolivia, where it is \$44. The average yearly income per capita in the countries studied is \$2,530, but the annual minimum wage is only 63.48 per cent of that figure.

Unemployment, one of the worst causes of poverty and hunger, stands at an average of 19.8 per cent, with Central America in the lead: Nicaragua 64 per cent; El Salvador 55 per cent; Guatemala 43.9 per cent and Honduras 41 per cent.

Overall economic growth for 1996 is estimated at around 3.4 per cent, with prospects of slowdown in 1997, with the increase rate of inflation.

Some reports warn that no progress has been made in reducing the levels of unemployment and there is less job security than ever, to the point that the labour market has been described as the most negative aspect in the region. Moreover, no increase has been seen in average real wages, which have in fact fallen in most nations.

In Brazil, the richest 20 per cent of the pop-

ulation earns 24.4 times more than the poorest 20 per cent, while in Colombia, the figure is 15.5 and in Chile, 12.6. To give an idea of what this means, in rich countries such as Japan and the United States, the figures are 3.4 and 8.9 respectively.

Progress made at a macroeconomic level still fails to be reflected at the social level, only showing up in statistics. Meanwhile, the gap between rich and poor widens and the number of dispossessed increases, their hunger, illness and illiteracy rates will worsen.

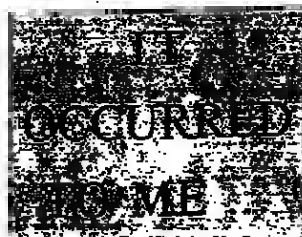
On the other hand, the mechanisms of defence cooperation in the Latin American countries still reflect the cold war, when the United States and Latin America's military strongmen shared the aim of cracking down on "communism." Today's needs are different, the weapons are mostly irrelevant to the region's security threats. In 1994, the region spent just 1.7 per cent of its collective GDP on defence, down from 3.1 per cent in 1985.

Yet now fears of a new arms race are growing as most Latin American countries prefer to spend public money on armed forces rather than on public needs.

Latin America lacks democracy, as the region is mostly ruled by dictatorships. Most Latin Americans support the principle of democratic governments. A 17-country opinion poll organised by a Chile-based (and mainly European Union-financed) organisation, found 61 per cent of respondents backing democracy, up from 58 per cent a year ago.

Economic slowdown, unemployment, poverty, corruption, lack of democracy, environmental pollution are big worries in Latin America. Regrettably, recent economic reforms brought further misery to the region.

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## Confusing Confucius

By Ali Kassay

I remember reading somewhere of a Chinese proverb which says roughly that whenever spring comes and the garden is in full bloom, with the lawns perfectly manicured, the hedges trimmed to a nice, and the flowers are bursting in a cascade of colours, invariably an ugly weed pops up its head. The Greeks also had a thing or two to say about it. In their drama, whenever you see a hero stepping high and mighty and having a bit of a good time out of life, you know that Nemesis is hot on his heels, and not so far behind, for that matter.

So, what do we in Jordan have to say about it? Well, unfortunately, it is being said for us. I remember in the eighties the pride with which we spoke of our educational system. Over a decade we told friend and foe how the Jordanian system of education had brought enlightenment to all and sundry within the realm and beyond, and we waxed eloquent on the great benefits that it was bringing not only to our country, but also to our brethren beyond.

Then, after ten years of this eulogy, there came a nasty international report that identified Jordan's system of education as one of the principal barriers against its development and progress, because, among other things, it depends entirely on learning by heart and it discourages conceptual and analytical thinking. That was a nasty one. It threw a major spanner into the works of our self image. It was necessary to take a deep, serious look at ourselves and find something else to be proud of.

So we fell back on our marvellous and efficacious infrastructure which, coupled with the relentless progress being achieved to streamline the bureaucracy, were placing us a few lengths ahead of our competitors in the race to become the focal point where international and domestic investment will converge, bringing prosperity to all and sundry.

Now that was quite a nice one. I, for one, departed from my usual cynicism and swallowed it hook, line and sinker. I argued with and confounded the sceptics who kept telling me that I should believe my eyes rather than statistics. I was happy. Then another nasty report reared its ugly head, informing us that we trail in these areas of achievement and reform well behind others at whom we had grown accustomed to pointing the finger of disdain and mockery. Not only that, but it appears that our lag is increasing rather than diminishing.

This one was a stunner. I woke the morning, not an older and a wiser man, but rather like the child who had been told frequently by his mother that he is MENSA material, and he did not realise that this was mother's heart not mother's head talking, until he sat an intelligence quotient test and discovered that his IQ stands at around room temperature. "Mom, why are these horrible people telling me that I am not bright?"

Which pushes me back to seek solace in ancient Chinese culture. I am trying to find out if Confucius, in his infinite wisdom, gave advice on what to do when the garden is awash with weeds, the lawns are patchy, the hedges overgrown, and the flowers wilting, such where to go for a canister of weed killer and a sack of potting moss.

سكنا من الجسد



## Iran calls for aid after killer quake

TEHRAN (Agencies) — Iran on Tuesday launched an appeal for international aid after the earthquake which struck the Ardabil region killing almost 1,000 people, the U.N. office here announced.

In coordination with the United Nations, authorities in the Islamic republic drew up a list of urgent needs for the 40,000 homeless and other survivors of the quake to be sought from the international community.

The United Nations will transmit the appeal for humanitarian aid to donor countries, the U.N. office said.

The quake in the northwestern province of Ardabil, registering 5.5 degrees on the Richter scale, killed at least 965 people and injured 2,600, according to the latest official toll.

Iran's last appeal for such help from the international community dates back to 1990 when around 40,000 people were killed in an earthquake which struck the Rudbar Valley, which like Ardabil lies near the Caspian Sea in northern Iran.

A light aircraft with four people on board crashed, meanwhile, near Ardabil, IRNA said. The French-made Dassault Falcon was on a flight from Tehran on Monday to help with the relief efforts.

President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's flight to the quake region Tuesday was called off because of heavy snowfall, said journalists who were to have accompanied him from Tehran.

Overnight snowfall of as much as 30 centimetres and fog were hampering the rescue efforts for victims of Friday's quake.

The government announced that it was allocating \$100 million for reconstruction.

Interior Minister Ali Mohammad Besharati told IRNA that most of the injured have been discharged from hospital. He said 11,200 homes collapsed in the quake, which destroyed or damaged more than 100 villages.

Some 500 aftershocks of varying intensity have jolted the region since Friday and a quake of 5.2 degrees shook the region on Sunday, causing further damage and cutting off power supplies to the area.

Several senior Iranian officials have been dispatched to the region to supervise relief efforts.

According to Iranian Red Crescent Society Director Valid Dastjerdi, some 5,000 rescuers have been dispatched to Ardabil.

Another Red Crescent official said that 8,700 tents have been provided to victims along with 21,800 blankets, 13,300 stoves, 50 tonnes of dates and 80 tonnes of bread.

Hojatoleslam Ghayuri, who was sent to Ardabil by Iran's paramount leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has urged families to open their homes to the victims until the government finishes rebuilding their houses.

He said on state television that tents did not provide much protection from the sub-zero temperatures, snow and strong winds in the area, among the coldest in Iran.

With the international community mobilised to help, Saudi King Fahd, whose country's ties with the Islamic republic are often troubled, has ordered a shipment of food, tents and blankets to be flown to the stricken areas.

Switzerland, Britain and Japan and several humanitarian organisations have also offered aid to Iran.

## Peru gets asylum offer but no breakthrough in embassy crisis talks

LIMA (R) — President Alberto Fujimori flew home from the Caribbean on Tuesday with an asylum offer from Cuba for Peru's Marxist rebels, but little to cheer about in the so far fruitless talks over the hostage crisis in Lima.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro's offer to take the roughly 20 rebels holding the Japanese ambassador's residence was one of the biggest boosts Mr. Fujimori has received in the 11-week-old crisis.

But a spokesman for the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) immediately poured cold water on the idea, insisting that the rebels had no intention of leaving Peru.

And an eighth round of talks between the government and 20-odd MRTA rebels, who are holding 72 VIP captives, showed the all-party agreement needed prior to an asylum deal was still elusive.

Guarantors overseeing the talks said after the meeting late on Monday between government negotiator Domingo Palermo and MRTA second-in-command Rolfo Rojas that both sides were just digging in behind their bargaining positions.

"The commission of guarantors can indicate that both sides are completing their proposals, which without encompassing agreement will clearly establish their positions," said a statement read by Canadian Ambassador Anthony Vincent, one of three guarantors.

The downbeat communiqué was a dash of cold water after a surprise trip by Mr. Fujimori to the Dominican Republic and Cuba raised prospects of an asylum deal to end the siege, which began on Dec. 17 when the rebel stormed the Japanese ambassador's home during a reception.

Mr. Fujimori told a news conference in Havana that Mr. Castro had agreed to grant the guerrillas asylum if all sides agreed to a way out of Latin America's longest

ever hostage siege.

"Cuba is willing to cooperate in the framework for this asylum but not to participate as a mediator," Mr. Fujimori said.

The two presidents cut an incongruous pair. Mr. Castro is the region's only communist ruler, while Mr. Fujimori is an avowed free-market proponent who has spent a large part of his six years in office hunting down communist guerrilla groups.

After seeing off Mr. Fujimori late on Monday at the end of his eight-hour visit, Mr. Castro confirmed to reporters that he would accept the MRTA fighters out of "moral duty" to help resolve the crisis peacefully and "not a question of convenience."

Asked if such a position might carry a political cost, Mr. Castro replied: "Yes, and what we want to do, stop helping when there are dozens of people's lives in danger?"

Mr. Fujimori arrived in Lima on the presidential jet soon after midnight early on Tuesday morning. But he left the military airport without comment to waiting reporters.

The president was due to meet Mr. Palermo later on Tuesday for a debriefing on talks with the MRTA, which are slated to confine on Wednesday at a safe house opposite the besieged residence.

As Mr. Fujimori returned to Peru, Tokyo gave its backing to the Cuban option.

"We highly appreciate President Fujimori's initiatives and we think this is a very effective method of resolving the crisis," Chief Cabinet Secretary Seiichiro Kajiyama told a news conference.

The MRTA's international spokesman Isaac Velasco said, however, that the diplomatic moves were pointless and premature. "We are not thinking about leaving Peru," he told reporters in Pamplona, Spain, where he was attending a book presentation.

## Delay hits Red Army case again in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Despite Japan's announcement that Lebanon is holding five wanted Japanese extremists, the Lebanese prosecutor said Tuesday it will take another day for the government to verify if the accused Japanese are indeed in custody.

The statement by Prosecutor-General Adnan Addoum follows two weeks of contradictory comments by Lebanon about whether members of the Japanese Red Army guerrilla group have been seized — or if any Japanese were arrested.

The Japanese announcement that members of the feared guerrilla group of the 1970s had finally been tracked down came after a team of investigators came from Tokyo with fingerprints and photographs of the suspects.

Mr. Addoum said he could not publicly reveal the identities of those held but said police were "instructed to check the validity of the new information" from Japan. He said the investigation should be completed in about 24 hours.

The apparent break in the case — at least from the Japanese viewpoint — came after Hiroshi Hirabayashi, a senior aide to Japan's prime minister,

## Japanese tourists' bus shot at after traffic dispute in Bekaa

BAALBEK (AFP) — A Syrian bus carrying Japanese tourists was shot at following a traffic dispute in Lebanon's eastern Bekaa Valley on Tuesday, security sources said.

No one was injured in the shooting and the two unidentified gunmen fled in their car, the sources said.

Suzanne Al Abed, a tourist guide accompanying the Japanese, told AFP that the incident occurred on a narrow road leading to the ancient city Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley in Syrian-controlled eastern Lebanon.

"We nearly collided with a Toyota

car coming at full-speed in front of us," she said. "But at the last moment the driver of the car turned swiftly to the right and the Toyota almost overturned."

"We continued as if nothing happened, but we heard an impact and a window was shattered," she said. "The driver must have opened fire because he was angry."

She said it was a "trivial road accident, because I am sure the passengers of the car could not see who was in the bus."

A Japanese tourist, who refused to

be identified in order not to worry her family in Tokyo, said: "At first I thought a stone had hit the window, but when I saw the broken window, I knew they had shot at us."

The tourists continued on to Baalbek where they visited the city's celebrated Roman ruins.

Traffic disputes frequently lead to violence in the Baalbek area, where arms are readily available and drivers are known to fire shots in the air to clear the road or to intimidate other drivers.

met Monday with President Elias Hrawi and Prime Minister Rafik Hariri.

Mr. Hirabayashi was reported to be going on Tuesday to Syria, which maintains some 40,000 troops in Lebanon and virtually controls Lebanese government decisions.

In the long drama of foreign hostages held in Lebanon during the 1980s and early 1990s, the hostages were almost all freed in Damascus, with governments from the host countries publicly thanking Syria for its cooperation.

In Tokyo, a Foreign Ministry statement Tuesday said Lebanon was holding eight Japanese in all, including five suspected members of the Red Army.

The other three also have been identified, it said, but declined to disclose their names.

The ministry said those in Lebanese custody include Kozo Okamoto, 49, who served 12 years in an Israeli jail for his role in a 1972 attack on Tel Aviv airport in which 26 people were killed. He was released in 1985 in a prisoner exchange between Israel and the Palestinians.

After the arrests in mid-February, Lebanese officials first confirmed, then denied, that the suspects were Red Army members. At one point they even announced there were no Japanese nationals in custody.

The bungling has turned what could have been a

major security coup for Lebanon into an embarrassment.

The Japanese Foreign Ministry said that in addition to Okamoto, the other Red Army members in custody in Lebanon are Mariko Yamamoto, 56, Kazuo Tohira, 44, Masao Adachi, 57, and Haruo Wako, 48.

"The ministry will call for prompt handover of the Red Army members," a Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said.

The spokeswoman said the identities of the five Red Army members were confirmed by Japanese investigators via finger prints and photographs provided by Lebanese authorities.

Japan's national police agency also announced the

detention of the five Red Army members and their identities.

"We will demand the extradition of the suspects while waiting for the results of Lebanese investigations," Toshio Yonemura, director of the police agency's foreign affairs division, told a news conference.

Mr. Yonemura declined to comment on what the five had been charged with, saying that was "the matter concerning Lebanese investigations."

Jiji Press said negotiations to have the Red Army members handed over were expected to be tough as Japan and Lebanon do not have an extradition treaty.

## King holds talks with Kinkel

(Continued from page 1)

Germans, are very much interested in the peace process...

Germany believes that it is possible to adopt steps to advance the peace process, he said, adding, "I am happy to be here now, today and tomorrow in Amman."

About economic cooperation between Jordan and Germany, Mr. Kinkel said: "I think we can do more and we should do more and there are 15 businessmen with me. We are already prepared to invest in your country..."

The German minister is also expected to hold talks with His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim

Kabarii.

On Jordanian-German ties, Mr. Kinkel told Jordan Television his talks were on economic cooperation will be in continuation of King Hussein's discussions in Germany last month.

Mr. Kinkel will also discuss with Jordanian officials the latest developments in the Middle East peace process and efforts to advance the quest for a durable, comprehensive and just peace in the region.

Also "expected" to be reviewed were the European role in the Middle East and the German role in particular in pushing the peace process.

Upon arrival, the German minister was received by Minister of Higher Education Abdullah Ensour and other officials.

## CBJ takes over bank

(Continued from page 1)

Bankers here say that the bank had been faltering since its establishment in 1982 by merging industrial and financial institutions.

They added that the bank had inherited more than a JD11 million debt from that merger, most of which has not been documented.

Banking sources stress that most of the bank's small depositors have withdrawn their funds early. However, a number of large companies and institutions still have large deposits with the bank.

The bank's liquidity dropped by 55 per cent, and the credit facilities dropped to JD38 million, while the gross assets fell to JD111 million and deposits to JD76.8 million.

This would be the third instance in which the CBJ intervenes in the banking system to protect Jordanian banks. The CBJ was involved in resolving crisis over the Petra Bank, the Jordan Gulf Bank, and Al Mashraq Bank.

Jordanian bankers commenting on the latest move said that the intervention of the CBJ to address the situation does not infringe on the Jordanian banking system's freedom and credibility but rather gives it advantage because it tends to protect the interests of the banking system.

The official said it is likely that negotiations with the Arab Bank will be revived to reach a deal that will save the CBJ from honouring financial obligations to depositors in case of the bank's liquidation.

The AIB's latest budget of 30 June 1996, estimated the total bank losses at JD34 million in excess of its capital.

(Continued from page 1)

The prime minister did not, however, give any indication of how much of the West Bank Israel ultimately intends to hand over to the Palestinians.

"All I can say is that they will not get 90 per cent of Judea and Samaria," he said, using the Jewish names for the West Bank.

Since the start of the self-

rule process in 1993, Israel has withdrawn from much of the Gaza Strip and eight main West Bank towns which represent about three per cent of the West Bank.

Israel has also handed civilian control over an additional 24 per cent of the West Bank to the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), but maintains a troop presence in these areas, mostly villages near the

## Crown Prince, EU envoy review peace process

(Continued from page 1)

evening — early Wednesday before returning to Brussels.

The spokesman declined to be specific on the issues covered by Mr. Moratinos while in Amman, but said the problem of Palestinian refugees as well as efforts to enhance inter-faith dialogue were also raised by the Crown Prince in his meeting with the EU envoy.

The meeting was attended by former Royal Court Chief Adnan Abu Odeh and Royal Scientific Society President Hani Mulki.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said Mr. Moratinos expressed appreciation of Jordan's role in the peace process and said that the EU was looking forward for its partnership with the Kingdom.

Mr. Moratinos earlier met Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabarii for an exchange of views about Middle Eastern affairs and the peace process as well

as Israel's settlement plans and European efforts to secure the resumption of Israeli-Syrian and Israeli-Lebanese peace talks. Petra said.

Mr. Kabarii called for intense efforts to remove the obstacles in the peace process on all fronts so that a just and durable peace can be guaranteed, Petra said.

Mr. Kabarii praised the EU's efforts to help the various parties in the Middle East to reach the aspired goal, the agency said.

Mr. Moratinos described his meeting with Mr. Kabarii as fruitful and constructive, adding that he briefed the prime minister on the outcome of his endeavours to advance the peace negotiations.

Noting that Jordan is playing a very important role in the peace process, Mr. Moratinos expressed Europe's willingness to back the Kingdom's efforts in the peacemaking and peacebuilding process.

Referring to Israel's

announcement of plans to build a Jewish settlement on Arab East Jerusalem, he said that the peace process requires from all sides to avoid violence and refrain from taking any decisions that could damage mutual confidence.

He said that the Israeli decision to build the settlement could damage the goodwill of the parties involved in the peace process.

Spokesman Feraud said Mr. Moratinos held a round of talks with Water and Irrigation Minister Samir Kawar on "regional water sources and projects."

Mr. Feraud declined to make any specific comment on prospects for EU financing for dams to be built on Jordan and Yarmouk rivers as called for in the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty.

"We need to discuss the issue in details before any specific comment could be made," he told the Jordan Times.

## Arafat: Netanyahu is still 'partner'

(Continued from page 1)

personally and publicly decried the decision announced last week by Mr. Netanyahu.

Mr. Netanyahu on Tuesday brushed aside the criticism and said work on the new Jewish quarter would begin in coming days.

In interviews with two public Israeli radio networks, Mr. Netanyahu said "there was nothing new" in criticism of the settlement plan expressed by Mr. Clinton.

At those talks, Mr. Clinton said Israel should have cancelled the plan because it "builds distrust."

"We expected this," was Mr. Netanyahu's response.

"The U.S. reaction was cautious and simply reflected the fact that we do not share the same views on Jerusalem," he said. "This is not new, it has been this way since 1967."

"The Americans understand our policy very well, that we are committed to building in Jerusalem, which has been our capital for 3,000 years. I will not be influenced by criticism from anywhere in the

world," Mr. Netanyahu said.

He said surveying work would begin at "Har Homa" on Jabal Abu Ghneim in the next few days. When completed, "Har Homa" will complete a strip of Jewish settlements cutting Arab East Jerusalem off from Bethlehem to the south.

Officials had initially said the surveyors would start work on Tuesday, but Mr. Netanyahu said this had been postponed due to "technical and legal" problems "for one, two or at most three days."

He rejected Israeli media reports that the brief delay was designed to avoid incidents ahead of Mr. Netanyahu's scheduled visit on Wednesday to Egypt for talks with President Hosni Mubarak, who has been very critical of the project.

"Israeli law calls for a 15-day delay between when a project is announced in the official journal and the start of work, and this was announced only on Sunday," he said. "If it was not for these legal constraints, the bulldozers would already be at Har Homa."

Israeli press reports on

Tuesday said construction at the site was expected to begin within two weeks, timed to follow a new Israeli troop withdrawal from further areas of the West Bank in order to limit Palestinian protests.

Israel will wreck the peace process, bring down Mr. Arafat and boost Islamic fundamentalism if it goes ahead with plans to build the settlement, a Palestinian leader warned.

Faisal Hussein, the top Palestinian official in Jerusalem, told the German newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung that if the settlement in the eastern sector is built, it will bury the peace process.

"In that case, the Palestinian leadership will collapse, and the cards will slip out of their hands. The only force that can rise up then is the fundamentalists," he said.

Mr. Hussein added: "I think there will be a confrontation at the construction site. We will not be violent. But if the Israelis resort to violence, that will be the end ... of this Palestinian leadership."

Bank under full Palestinian control, primarily by withdrawing troops from areas where the PNA already exercises civilian powers.

The Yediot Aharanot said the withdrawal would concern a large tract of land in the northern West Bank and smaller zones near the central town of Ramallah and Hebron in the south.

By the end of the three phases of the new withdrawals, Palestinians say that under the

Oslo accords with Israel, they should be in full control of 90 per cent of the West Bank, with Israeli troops present only around 140 Jewish settlements and small military locations.

Israeli hardliners say these military locations could cover up to 50 per cent of the West Bank, notably including the Jordan Valley, a buffer zone along the Israeli-West Bank border and much land around Jerusalem.

## De Charette optimistic on Syria-Israel peace talks

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — French Foreign Minister Hervé de Charette was optimistic about prospects for peace between Israel and Syria at the start of a Middle East tour on Tuesday.

In an interview with the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, Mr. De Charette said Syria wants to reach a peace agreement.

"Often I hear doubts from the Israeli side about this," he said. But "there should not be any doubts. Syria is really looking for an arrangement with Israel."

After a meeting with Mr. De Charette, however, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said it was up to Syria to make the next move.

"It depends mostly on Syria," he said at a news conference Tuesday. "There is no doubt about the desires of Israel for peace with Syria. We don't want to cut Syria out of the circle of peace but ... Syria needs to express its desire for peace."

Mr. Levy said Mr. De Charette had updated him on talks he held in Paris with the Syrian deputy prime minister and foreign minister.

"It was interesting to hear," Mr. Levy said after a two-hour working lunch with Mr. De Charette. "He will hold talks in the coming days in Syria and he will update me."

Talks between Israel and Syria have been on hold for a year.

Mr. De Charette did not say whether Mr. Levy had asked him to relay a message to Syrian President Hafez Al Assad when he goes to Damascus on Wednesday.

Syria wants Israel to return the strategic Golan Heights, seized during the 1967 Mideast war, as part of any peace agreement, but Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel should maintain control over the strategic plateau.

Mr. De Charette said he had not decided how France will vote in an upcoming U.N. Security Council vote on an Israeli plan to build a new Jewish settlement in Arab East Jerusalem, where the Palestinians hope to establish a capital.

Mr. De Charette met later Tuesday with Mr. Netanyahu and planned also to visit Israel's parliament. He will travel Wednesday to Syria and then to Lebanon.

Syria said Tuesday that a European Union (EU) role is essential to save the Middle East peace process because the United States as chief sponsor of the initiative has failed to produce results.

"The European Union's intervention in the peace process has become necessary and imperative to save this process and bring it back on to the right track," said Al Baath newspaper of Syria's ruling party.

It said the United States had made an "important" contribution since the Arab-Israeli peace process was launched in 1991 but "these efforts have so far not produced any positive or concrete results."

It said the EU had a geographic advantage over the United States and was "the only international force in the current situation that can break the impasse in the peace process and allow a resumption" of the peace talks.

Syria's top negotiator with Israel said in a newspaper interview published on Monday that he does not expect the United States to exert pressure on the Jewish state to revive the peace process.

A renewal of peace talks depends on a "political decision" from Mr. Netanyahu to respect commitments by the previous Labour government for a withdrawal from the Golan Heights, said Walid Al Moalleni.

"I don't expect the United States to put pressure on Netanyahu even if his positions clash with U.S. vital interests," he told the Egyptian daily Al Ahrum.



## U.N. to spend \$12.4m on 3-year Syrian development programme

DAMASCUS (AFP) — The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has allocated \$12.4 million to modernise Syria's administration and boost its natural and human resources, the UNDP representative said Monday.

The three-year programme, which began in January, is part of a UNDP-Syrian cooperation agreement. Bulem Aktuf said.

The UNDP aims to create a climate favourable for increasing investment in Syria. "We are at a stage where we must improve the

administrative system," Mr. Aktuf said.

The UNDP will also draw up a "national strategy on environmental matters," conforming with guidelines set at the U.N. international summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The agency also plans to introduce new irrigation techniques.

The programme will also try to boost job creation, which otherwise is not expected to keep pace with the country's rapid population growth.

Mr. Aktuf said 150,000 to 200,000 young Syrians

enter the job market every year.

Syria has not made its unemployment rate public but UNDP and International Labour Organisation studies have "a clear view" of the job market, he said.

A U.N. study published in February 1996 showed that about 40 per cent of the rural population and 18 per cent of urban residents live below the poverty line, which is 1,500 Syrian pounds (\$40) a month.

Syria's annual per capita gross national product is

\$1,100, according to the World Bank.

A study published recently in Al Baath, the ruling party newspaper, said that between 1990 and 1994, the standard of living for the Syrian middle class had fallen.

The newspaper said salaries have not kept pace with price increases, especially food prices, which jumped 40 per cent during that period while salaries increased only about 10 per cent.

## Asia energy demand projected to rise 5.7 per cent in 1997

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Demand for energy in Asia will expand 5.7 per cent this year despite slower overall regional economic growth, the Cambridge Energy Research Associates (CERA) has reported.

The research and consulting firm said Asia was "fast becoming the world's leading regional energy market."

But it warned international investors, who may be competing for deals worth billions of dollars over the next couple of years, "the balance of negotiating power" is shifting to "the government side of the table."

According to CERA President Daniel Yergin, "the centre of gravity for the world energy industries is shifting towards Asia."

oil demand will exceed that of North America — providing the success of Asia's formidable economies. Companies are scrambling to redesign their strategies to lock in opportunities in markets in which the competition is getting tougher and tougher," he pointed out.

Dennis Eklof, another senior analyst at CERA, noted that most economies in Asia were going through a period of economic readjustment.

"The most pressing question for investors is whether the slowdown is merely a pause or points to a fundamental new direction for Asian growth," he said.

"Key to answering that question is how effectively the region solves its energy and infrastructure bottle-

necks," Mr. Eklof added.

The study put Asian economic growth at 3.9 per cent this year, down from five per cent in the first half of the decade, in response to internal problems, rising wage costs and sluggish export markets.

But as demand for energy remains strong, there will be increased competition among investors, "leading to a strengthening of governments' hand" in negotiations, the report said.

It concluded that Asian countries "are shifting to more regional focuses, and energy opportunities are following that shift," energy markets and energy projects will increasingly involve more than one country.

## Algeria reports \$4.3 b '96 trade surplus

PARIS (R) — Algeria had a trade surplus of \$4.3 billion in 1996 against a deficit of \$521 million in 1995, the government said in a statement quoted by the official Algerian news agency APS.

The strong performance came from a nearly \$1.7 billion cut in the country's import bill, a surge in international crude oil prices and a 74 per cent rise in non-oil and gas exports to \$881 million in 1996, said the statement issued after a cabinet meeting.

The statement gave no more detailed figures for imports and exports but said: "The achievement of this trade balance surplus... reflected a beginning of a drop in food imports and in the range of imported semi-finished products where national production

is appreciable."

Last month, Prime Minister Ahmad Ouyahia was quoted by Algerian state radio as saying the country harvested a record 4.9 million tonnes of cereals in the 1995/96 season, against only 2.13 million tonnes in the previous season.

The value of Algeria's exports of oil and gas rose to \$12.5 billion in 1996, up 29 per cent from the year before, according to latest official figures.

Algeria earned an average of \$21.6 per barrel in 1996 compared to a government budgeted average of \$16-\$17 per barrel for the year. Oil and gas exports account for over 94 per cent of Algeria's total exports.

According to available government figures on foreign trade, Algeria's total imports were at \$3.756 bil-

lion up to May 1996 against exports of \$5.106 billion in the same period.

Algeria's imports totalled about \$10.8 billion in 1995 against \$9.4 billion in 1994. Exports were at about \$10 billion in 1995 from \$8.5 billion in 1994.

It has liberalised trade in 1990 and private importers controlled about 41 per cent of the country's imports in 1996, officials said.

Meanwhile, Industry Minister Abdesslem Bouchouareb said some 130,000 jobs will be scrapped in Algeria between now and the end of next year.

He told a press conference that 40 national enterprises and 363 local businesses had closed down last year, affecting more than 10,000 workers.

He said 200 more local

businesses and 50 national industries would be privatised by the end of next year.

He added that the government's privatisation policy, launched one year ago, had not had the expected results because the law governing the procedure was too strict.

He said the National Transition Council, the country's interim parliament, had just passed a number of amendments to the legislation, which would enable companies to be bought on credit and also permit buyers to change the activity of the business purchased.

The new law also envisages the sale of shares to workers in privatised companies and to the general public.

## Income divisions slice up Britain — ONS

LONDON (AFP) — Britain is divided by deep income inequality which has taken hold since the 1980s, the latest Social Trends Survey, published by the government, has showed.

The number of people with lowest incomes has risen by 150 per cent since the 1980s, although the pace of division has now slowed, statisticians from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) concluded in their annual report.

"The proportion of people with incomes below half the average increased from eight

per cent in 1982 to just over 20 per cent between 1990 and 1992 since when it has fallen slightly," the report said.

An economist who helped compile the data, Ailsa Goodman, said that there has been "no definite drop in the rate at which we saw inequality rise in the 1980s."

At that time, the governing Conservative Party enjoyed its first term of office and introduced sweeping labour reforms, deregulation and competition across the British economy.

"The 1980s was a time when the level of unionisation in the workforce declined and we saw our pay-parity disappear," Ms. Goodman said.

"There were huge pay rises for top earners but the unskilled workers did not share in these gains," the economist at the Institute for Fiscal Studies said.

Demand for unskilled workers has declined with the introduction of modern technology. And wages have been kept down in Britain so that manufacturing industries

can compete with producers in developing countries.

"People talk a lot about globalisation, so that unskilled workers in Britain are in direct competition with people in developing countries and their wages have not gone up," Ms. Goodman said.

The ONS said in its report that almost 25 per cent of employees in Britain earned less than four pounds (\$6.5) per hour in the first quarter of 1996.

But the government stressed that average income had risen by 37 per cent in real terms between 1979 and 1994.

"Our goal is, as it always has been, to create jobs to increase people's wealth," a government spokesman said.

### REUTERS

### REUTERS

#### The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	SEK	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.7083	0.6184	1.4836	121.80	1.3690	1704.50	1.3218	6.7648
DE Mark	0.5853	-	0.3538	0.5636	163.65	0.7536	9.3633	0.7456	3.5361
GB Sterling	1.6170	2.7645	-	2.3963	196.92	2.2137	2758.18	3.1079	9.3217
JP Yen	0.0082	1.4022	0.6070	1.2170	-	1.1231	13.38	157.66	4.7293
IT Lira	0.0006	1.5024	0.3824	0.8570	1401.15	0.8028	-	11.27	3.3907
SE Krona	0.1366	0.2265	0.1072	0.2574	21.11	0.2374	33.33	-	-
FR Franc	0.1735	0.2965	0.1072	0.2574	21.11	0.2374	33.33	33.3300	-

Energy		
Oil	Last	Previous
Brent	19.65	19.55
WTI	19.55	19.45
Bony	10.65	10.55
Debut	17.35	17.25
UL Gas	195.00	195.00

Mid-East Currencies					
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2667	0.4560	0.16491	0.39585	32.5035
KW Dinar	3.2948	5.6338	2.03749	4.88237	401.806
CY Pound	1.8537	3.3389	1.2073	2.8979	237.924

Metal Prices		
Metal	Bid	Offer
Gold (oz)	359.15	359.65
Platinum (oz)	394.5	395.5
CU (3 Months)	91.4	91.4
Lead (3 Months)	91.4	91.4
Nickel (3 Months)	91.4	91.4

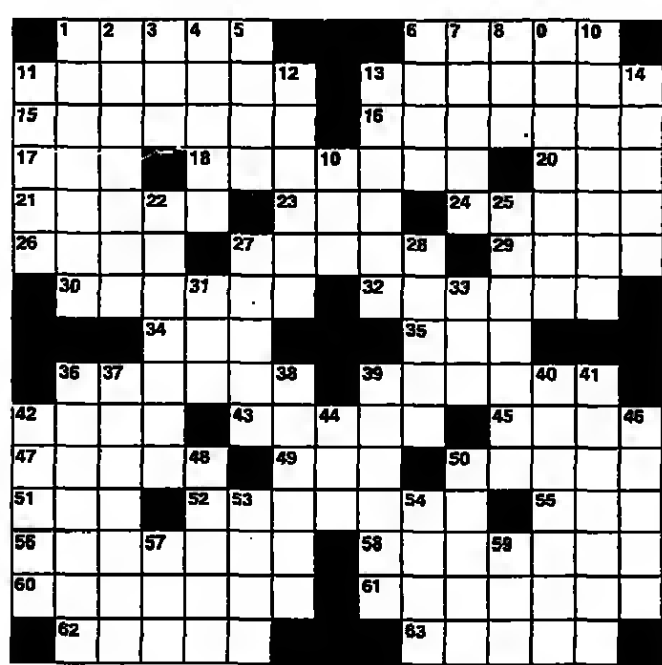
Currency Deposit Rates (Mid)					
Period	1	3	6	9	12
USD	8.32	8.44	8.56	8.68	8.80
JPY	0.36	0.35	0.34	0.33	0.32
FRF	3.10	3.25	3.27	3.31	3.34
ITL	7.35	7.30	7.10	6.98	7.00

Commodity		
Commodity	Last	Delivery
Coffee (c/b)	194.55	Spot
Sugar (c/b)	309.5	Spot
Soy (c/b)	22.97	Spot
Barley (c/b)	0	Spot

JOD Cross Rates		
Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
DE Mark	0.416	0.4171
FR Franc	0.123	0.1236
NL Guilder	0.359	0.3708

## THE Daily Crossword

- ACROSS
- Academic specialty
  - Recreation areas
  - City on the Ganges
  - Spread gossip
  - Aromatic seasoning
  - Lightweight fabric
  - Prepare for war
  - French shrine town
  - Large vessel
  - Oro
  - Dessert
  - Fine-grained rock
  - Gainsay
  - Avant-garde painter
  - Acidity
  - Leased
  - Sufferer for a cause
  - Alias
  - A word from Scrooge
  - Spot for a vacation
  - Western fare
  - Document abbr.
  - Commandment word
  - Hockey milieu
  - Conforms to
  - Amin of Uganda
  - Quaking
  - de plume
  - British royal family
  - Golf item
  - "Light" (TV soap)
  - List separately
  - Star in Scorpio
  - Yielded to
  - Suburb of Buffalo
  - Fumbled in speaking



### Saturday's Puzzle solved:

ICON	FILED	LOGS
OADD	ONLINE	UVEA
OVERDRAFTS	TENN	
LEA	ICIER	HEROO
OVERSEES	JAT	
STOVE	NOTSO	
HOVER	LOON	ATE
AGER	TITUS	TOTA
ORD	AFTS	SLURP
ROUTE	LOSER	
SRI	PASSOVER	
MITOAS	ATRIP	EXE
OMIT	OVERSTAYED	
KENT	FERIA	GENE
EDDY	TRESS	ASON

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- DOWN
- More jolly
  - Windflower
  - Drinking bout

- Papal scarf
- NV city
- Pretty
- Assemble
- Family member
- Freedom from intrusion
- Lawmaker
- Place of wood
- Line of (increased power)
- Buy back
- Discourage
- Make fun of
- Line of rulers
- Gives a whipping to
- Diminishes
- Capital of Morocco
- Ring decision
- Deserter
- Spring back
- Recluse
- Odde and ends
- "Twelfth Night" character
- Strong current

- at (treated with contempt)
- Dence
- Bustle
- Kicked, in a way
- County

- Palm
- Again
- Imprint clearly
- Bounce over water
- Small gull

### Peanuts



### Andy Capp



### Mutt'n'Jeff



### HOROSCOPE FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5, 1997

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

**ARIES:** (March 21 to April 19) You have some interesting ideas about how to add to your present income today, however, you must manipulate the difficulties connected with them first. Later this evening will be good to go out on the town with your mate.

**TAURUS:** (April 20 to May 20) An idea which someone gives you may at first seem worthless today, however, if you look more closely you'll change your mind. Get out later this evening and socialise with your mate and meet close friends in the process.

**GEMINI:** (May 21 to June 21) Find a method of operation today to deal with a difficult fellow associate which will make you more efficient in your own career activities. Purchase something thoughtful for your mate and he or she will return your appreciation.

**MOON CHILDREN:** (June 22 to July 21) Get in touch with a fellow associate early today and arrange a recreational activity which he or she will enjoy. Bring your mate along, and you'll benefit greatly by making the experience quite enjoyable.

**LEO:** (July 22 to August 21) If you invite any guests into your home today, make sure they are trustworthy or you could discover some items are missing. Get practical matters arranged with your loved ones, despite delays which could exist.

**VIRGO:** (August 22 to September 22) Don't write or say anything today when communicating with others which could be used against you. Be sure to drive with the utmost care later this evening, so that you don't get into any difficulties.

**LIBRA:** (September 23 to October 22) Get advice from an expert today before dealing with any financial or tax matters. Be sure you maintain your poise in any conversations, so that you won't generate the wrong impression, especially with a bigwig.

**SCORPIO:** (October 23 to November 21) If you want to get a very practical person to agree with your ideas today, be sure you have all the correct facts and figures before you begin. Later this evening will be good for seeking the assistance of a fellow associate.

**SAGITTARIUS:** (November 22 to December 21) If you agree to some labour for someone today, be sure you are both agreed on the compensation to be received. Work on improving your property and thereby you can make it more valuable and beautiful.

**CAPRICORN:** (December 22 to January 20) Plan some amusements for the days ahead, however, don't neglect other promises you have made. Try to be more understanding of your mate and be or she will be quite receptive; to all of the attention provided.

**AQUARIUS:** (January 21 to February 19) If you invite any guests into your home today, don't discuss financial matters or difficulties could ensue. Take the time to arrange your schedule so that you will have some free time to spend with your loved ones.

**PISCES:** (February 20 to March 20) A good friend can show you how to get the assistance you need today, and he or she may let you in on a bargain. Show your gratitude to this person by doing something which he or she would not expect.

**Birthstone of March:** Aquamarine — Jasper.



## Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic press

### Resumption of trade exchange with Kuwait seen easing Jordan's difficulties in marketing produce

**\*\* COMMENTING ON** the resumption of trade exchange between Jordan and Kuwait after a hiatus of six years, Jordanian economists said the step was highly positive towards resuming commercial and economic ties between the two countries.

According to a senior source at the Kuwaiti ministry of foreign affairs, trade exchange between Jordan and Kuwait resumed yesterday (Monday). The source indicated that the trade exchange consisted of fruits and vegetables as well as medicines and medical products.

He said that Kuwait has at last allowed Jordanian trucks to transport the products to its territory directly by land instead of transporting it through a third party. Jordanian products had been exported to Lebanon and to the United Arab Emirates where they acquired certificates of origin from those countries to make possible reexport to Kuwait.

Supply Minister Munir Sobar considered the step as "good omen" to bring back economic and trade relations with Kuwait to where it was before the Gulf crisis. He confirmed that the Kuwaiti move will solve a good part of marketing bottlenecks facing the Jordanian agricultural exports to Arab Gulf states. The minister indicated that the Kuwait market will absorb large quantities of these exports and, as such, the situation of the farmers in the Kingdom will improve.

Mohammad Halaiah, director general of the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centres Corporation (JEDCO) described the Kuwaiti market as one of the important markets for Jordan as it is characterised by a high purchasing power. "The Kuwaiti market has got accustomed to the Jordanian products, especially the fruits and vegetables, which finds high demand from Kuwaiti consumers," Dr. Halaiah explained.

He indicated that the resumption of trade was a result of contacts between the two countries and many visits by Kuwaiti businessmen who visited the Kingdom and expressed interest to purchase various Jordanian products. "We at JEDCO" were receiving many calls and inquiries from Kuwaiti traders and businessmen who wanted to import Jordanian products," Dr. Halaiah stressed.

The JEDCO chief noted that the permission to Jordanian trucks to go directly to Kuwait is an important matter as this would facilitate the flow of products and reduce transportation costs.

Dr. Halaiah hoped that Jordanian exports would regain their important place and return to the same level as before. In this regard, he revealed that JEDCO is currently studying the possibility of organising an industrial fair in Kuwait at a later date in addition to the opening of a Jordanian commercial centre there in response to the wishes of Kuwaiti traders.

Exports to Kuwait amounted to JD 11 million in 1990 but declined gradually in the following three years. The volume of trade picked up in 1994 to reach JD 1.4 million but fell to JD 900,000 in 1995. Exports shot up sharply last year reaching JD 20 million. Dr. Halaiah considers the JD 20 million very low as the capacity of the Kuwaiti market to absorb Jordanian products is much higher (Al Dustour).

### Lloyd's Register delay clearance of goods at Aqaba, Jordan says

**\*\* CLEARING COMPANIES** at the port of Aqaba have protested to the government that Lloyd's Register agents are delaying clearance of goods bound for Iraq and Jordan. The delays damage the goods and ultimately result in losses for merchants, said Salim Jadoun, head of the port's clearance union. "These agents have no right to open Jordan-bound containers for inspections," Mr. Jadoun said Monday. "This is a violation of Jordanian sovereignty."

In 1994 the London-based Lloyd's Register set up offices in Aqaba to prevent violations of U.N. sanctions through stringent inspections.

Lloyd's operations have replaced naval inspections carried out by a multinational naval force deployed in the Gulf and the Red Sea in 1991. Iraq used Aqaba because its own ports in the Gulf were damaged in the 1980-88 Gulf war.

Mr. Jadoun said inspectors take their time in approving the transit of food and medicine. Such items do not need a permit because humanitarian re-exempt from sanctions, which were imposed after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 (AP).

## Gulf Air cuts jobs

MANAMA (R) — Debt-ridden regional carrier Gulf Air is axing scores of employees to cut costs, Bahrain's Gulf Daily News newspaper has reported.

So far 40 staff — 15 Bahrainis, 24 Omanis and a Qatari — have received their dismissal letters, the daily quoted unnamed sources as saying. In addition, about 100 employees are being told to retire early, it added.

The airline said last month it expected staff cuts under a restructuring programme to help recover from heavy losses.

The Manama-based carrier, owned by the governments of Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and Abu Dhabi, posted a \$159 million loss in 1995.

It has not yet announced its results for 1996.

Last year, Gulf Air began offering an early retirement programme for Bahraini staff who had served for at least 20 years. More than 70 staff are believed to have taken advantage of the programme, the paper said.

More dismissals of Bahraini staff are expected, with the total seen at between 80 and 110, the newspaper reported.

Officials have said the carrier faced \$2 billion in debts resulting from lavish buying of costly aircraft on loans and opening numerous uneconomic routes in the 1980s.

## Gold demand in developing markets hits new record

HONG KONG (AFP) — Gold demand in developing countries reached a record 2,242 tonnes in 1996, just ahead of the previous peak set a year earlier, the World Gold Council said in a report.

But consumption of the yellow metal in developed countries was 13 per cent below the 1995 record but remained comparable with the levels of 1993 and 1994, according to the council's latest report.

The 1996 demand in developing countries edged up to a record of 1,825 tonnes, one per cent above the 1995 level, with continued progress in India, Turkey, Indonesia and South Korea offset by softer demand in China, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan and Thailand.

"The overall 1996 performance is a testament to the strength of jewellery demand, which reached a new record last year," said the council's report.

India recorded the world's largest market for gold consumption, with continued growth pushing demand over 500 tonnes for the first time ever.

In Indonesia, gold demand rose 8.0 per cent to a record level of 129 tonnes, due to lower gold prices towards the end of the year, which stimulated both jewellery and investment demand.

In Malaysia, demand for gold rose 14 per cent to 33.6 tonnes and demand in South Korea rose 4.0 per cent to 15.5 tonnes.

Slower retail environment saw gold demand in China falling 7.0 per cent to 207.7 tonnes, while Taiwan fell 23 per cent to 123.3 tonnes and Hong Kong fell 6.0 per cent to 11.4 tonnes due to increasingly fierce competition from other consumer products such

as coins. Thailand, which suffered from the impact of a gloomy economic environment, saw its demand for gold fall 9.0 per cent to 24.5 tonnes.

Singapore's full-year demand was 17 per cent lower at 20 tonnes, reflecting the sluggish retail environment and a slowing economy. In Japan, total demand fell 41 per cent to a seven-year low of 170.3 tonnes because of a decline in investment.

Vietnamese consumption rose 14 per cent to 41 tonnes.

Demand in Saudi Arabia and Dubai for the year increased 2.0 per cent to a four-year high of 237.5 tonnes.

## OPIC backs U.S.-Arab fund for Mideast business development

MUSCAT (AFP) — A U.S. federal agency has offered guarantees to participants in a new \$45 million U.S.-Arab fund designed to invest in private ventures in the Middle East, the U.S. embassy in Oman has said.

The guarantee agreement was signed in Muscat this week by Ruth Harkin, president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) and the Inter-Arab Investment Fund (IAIF), the embassy said in a statement.

The IAIF, managed by

California-based Inter-Arab Management Inc., "will make long-term direct equity investments in new expanding or privatising businesses in Oman, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza."


Its initial capital of \$45 million should come from businessmen in the United States, contributing \$30 million and Jordan and Oman, each investing \$7.5 million, a U.S. embassy official told AFP.

The embassy statement said the fund, designed to have a life of 10 to 12 years, "will invest in pro-


jects with ties to the United States, either through management or through the purchase of American goods and services."

OPIC is a federal agency that sells investment services to U.S. businesses investing in some 140 emerging markets and developing nations.

"Encouraging peace through trade and investment in the Middle East is a top priority" of President Bill Clinton's administration, Mr. Harkin said at the signing ceremony, the embassy reported.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET											
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - STREET 101											
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179											
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 04/03/1997											
PAST 12 MONTHS	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE		
5000	5000										
269,000	205,000	ARAB BANK	14.6	1.31	12	300	80200	268.25	267.00	1.25	
2,100	1,900	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	23	11555	22317	1.93	1.94	0.01	
3,650	2,900	BANK OF JORDAN	10.8	0.00	4	1000	3020	3.16	3.00	0.16	
2,610	2,120	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	5.3	6.05	2	123	282	2.34	2.30	0.04	
5,200	4,250	THE HOUSING BK.	12.4	2.97	10	4764	22137	4.65	4.65	-	
2,950	2,440	JOR. KUTAYAT BANK	19.8	0.00	4	1010	2763	2.74	2.73	0.01	
1,090	840	JOR. GULF BANK	5.3	8.24	15	21150	18018	1.85	1.85	-	
4,120	3,480	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	10.3	0.00	9	3114	11937	3.84	3.82	0.02	
3,800	3,000	JOR. INV. FID. BANK	17.3	0.00	4	23000	73600	3.25	3.20	0.05	
1,010	1,550	SECT. AL-HAL (SHRIWA)	1.0	9.68	1	100	155	1.58	1.55	0.03	
1,440	3,000	PELLEDEL. INV. BK.	9	0.00	1	300	363	1.22	1.21	-	
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											
2,800	1,820	JOR. FRANCE INSUR.	5.4	10.47	1	250	478	1.88	1.91	0.03	
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											
1,830	1,450	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	11.4	7.27	4	1500	2475	1.66	1.65	0.01	
5,250	4,200	ARAB TEL. BOTELS	16.5	3.08	1	100	437	4.35	4.17	0.18	
1,542	1,000	KATL. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	24	13800	15870	1.17	1.15	0.02	
1,050	820	ARAB ESTATE INV.	21.3	3.88	2	2000	1920	0.96	0.96	-	
2,200	1,400	MID. EAST HOTELS	60.3	0.00	1	100	140	1.40	1.40	-	
2,220	2,690	KARMA EDUCATION	9	0.00	4	1325	1325	1.04	1.00	0.04	
2,230	2,690	UNIFIED CO.	8.5	6.18	33	18600	33088	1.83	1.78	0.05	
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											
3,730	3,060	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	19.4	2.94	23	12630	42938	3.40	3.40	-	
3,500	2,710	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	35.5	0.00	1	500	1650	3.30	3.30	-	
10,400	8,320	JOR. PETROL. REFINERY	10.3	7.88	12	2452	24888	10.15	10.15	-	
1,590	1,350	WOODEN INDUSTRIES	61.3	0.00	13	10650	14639	1.38	1.38	-	
3,500	3,650	INDUSTRIAL CORN. AGR.	34.6	0.00	3	700	1802	2.99	2.97	0.02	
7,090	6,470	JOR. PORTER BELLS	8.9	3.50	1	100	695	6.95	6.95	-	
4,350	2,640	ARAB FRANK. HAMP.	20.5	5.35	7	1326	4958	3.76	3.74	0.02	
7,250	5,050	JOR. CERAMIC IND.	8.5	3.64	1	300	2061	6.89	6.87	0.02	
2,400	2,050	JORDAN OILCO	13.5	6.82	1	100	220	2.20	2.20	-	
966	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9	0.00	26	35750	20025	0.58	0.56	0.02	
3,400	3,060	ARAB PAPER CORP. TRD.	7.9	8.93	2	300	348	1.18	1.16	0.02	
1,020	540	NATIONAL INDS.	9.6	9.23	3	2500	1605	0.65	0.65	-	
1,540	920	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	5	1000	912	0.92	0.92	-	
1,170	670	JOR. SULPHUR-CHRM.	9	0.00	1	1250	77	0.77	0.77	-	
1,670	1,080	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	28.1	0.00	8	2500	3734	1.61	1.50	0.11	
2,800	1,440	UNIV. HOSP. INDS.	5.0	12.20	14	12400	20989	1.64	1.64	-	
1,820	1,480	JOR. TDS. RESOURCES	16.6	0.00	13	5800	7393	1.33	1.32	0.01	
2,270	840	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	24.4	0.00	12	6550	5832	0.90	0.90	-	
2,360	1,080	INTL. TOBACCO	27.5	0.00	7	2850	2167	1.27	1.17	0.10	
1,470	930	UNION CH. & VEG.	24.4	0.00	6	1550	1535	0.99	0.99	-	
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											
INDEX: 116.77	INDEX: -0.06	359	99908	159263							
GRAND TOTAL											
INDEX: 155.76	INDEX: -0.37	314	203999	449766							
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR TUESDAY 04/03/1997											
790	500	JOR. TRADE FAC.	13.3	0.00	12	7500	3775	0.51	0.50	0.01	
850	700	UNION INV. 50%	66.0	0.00	21	17813	3477	0.71	0.69	0.02	
810	320	ARAB FID. INVEST.	0.00	0.00	15	20350	8804	0.44	0.43	0.01	
950	640	AL-DANIELY 75%	14.7	0.00	10	4000	4000	0.66	0.65	0.01	
640	210	JOR. INDS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	2	1500	345	0.24	0.23	0.01	
740	510	ARAB FOOD & MED.	8	0.00	6	817	364	0.60	0.59	0.01	
690	450	ARAB INTL. INV. TRD.	0.00	0.00	8	10300	4738	0.47	0.46	0.01	
820	520	KATL. KESTILE	9	0.00	4	1150	598	0.53	0.52	0.01	
880	490	KATL. MTL. ENG. KATMCO	8	0.00	27	30128	13338	0.46	0.44	0.02	
660	430	KATL. OILS & HOLS	0.00	0.00	2	5100	5021	0.62	0.61	0.01	
990	720	JORDAN STEEL	8	0.00	8	8750	6525	0.76	0.75	0.01	
700	430	ARAB ELECT. IND.	8	0.00	1	1500	765	0.51	0.51	-	
750	620	KIDPAST PHARM. 75%	8	0.00	1	650	241	0.62	0.62	-	
770	570	PAT. PHARM. 65%	8	0.00	10	5655	1347	0.58	0.58	0.01	
680	390	IND. INC.	26.5	0.00	2	2500	1075	0.43	0.42	0.01	
820	590	KATL. POLYMER	8	0.00	5	1500	1055	0.70	0.71	0.01	
950	530	KID. EAST COMPLEX	7.7	0.00	18	15550	10263	0.67	0.66	0.01	
GRAND TOTAL											
144	143553	65730									

↑ New 12 months low  
↓ Listed during the past 12 months  
P / E ratio is 100 or more  
+ Negative P/E  
E : Warning is zero or N/A for the most recent year



## Survey records changes in U.S. stock ownership

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Stock ownership in the United States has doubled in the past seven years to reach 43 per cent of American adults, most of whom are bullish about the new 12 months, a survey has disclosed.

The study, conducted for the NASDAQ electronic exchange, also detected changes in the make-up of the stockholding population.

Once the domain of the elderly, the affluent and the male, 47 per cent of today's investors are women and just 44 per cent are white men, according to a survey by Peter Hart Research Associates.

Fifty five per cent of investors are under the age of 50 and one half are not college graduates. In fact, the survey revealed,

most non-elderly investors describe themselves as blue or white collar workers rather than managers or professionals.

"To me, the encouraging news in this survey is the degree to which Americans are realizing that they hold the key, and bear responsibility, for their own financial futures," said NASDAQ President Alfred Berkeley.

"We are also pleased that the investing public is beginning to look more like America, which means that this message of self-reliance is being heard by a broader spectrum of the population than before."

Investments are increasingly being used as a means to guarantee retirement, rather than pension plans or the federal social security programme.



## In preparation for World Cup qualifiers Kingdom's soccer team leaves for Oman today

By Aileen Bannayan  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Kingdom's national soccer team leaves for Oman Wednesday for the third leg of their training camp in preparation for the Asian World Cup qualifiers which kick off in Manama, Bahrain April 8.

The Jordanian team will meet their Omani counterparts in Muscat March 9, and 11. Other friendlies scheduled by the Jordan Soccer Federation include two matches against Syria, March 16 in Amman and March 23 in Damascus.

The visit to Oman comes less than two weeks after an intensive two-week-long training camp in Baghdad where they played the Iraqi team twice losing 1-0.

Jordan earlier had two matches with the Lebanese national team. They lost the first encounter in Beirut 1-0 while the second one in Amman ended in a 0-0 draw.

Jordan's Asian Group 3 qualifiers start April 8 against the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

Thirty-six Asian countries will contest the first round World Cup qualifiers and have been divided into ten groups:

- Group 1: Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan.
- Group 2: Iran, Syria, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan.
- Group 3: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain.
- Group 4: Japan, Oman, Nepal, Macao.
- Group 5: Uzbekistan, Indonesia, Yemen, Cambodia.

Group 6: South Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong.  
Group 7: Kuwait, Lebanon, Singapore.  
Group 8: China, Turkmenistan, Vietnam, Tajikistan.  
Group 9: Iraq, Pakistan, Kazakhstan.  
Group 10: Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines.  
The 10 groups winners will qualify for the second round where the teams will be divided into two groups.  
The first two from each group will then contest the Asian finals.

The first three qualify directly for the 1998 World Cup in France while the winner of a play-off between the fourth team and the Oceania Zone winner will also qualify.

The Kingdom's team includes Ahmad Abu Nasouh, Mu'taz Rishah, Mohammad Abu Daoud, Yousef Ammouri, Mohammad Khaz'ali, Abdallah Abu Zame'h, Amjad Taher, Faisal Ibrahim, Isam Mahmoud, Hussein Shananeh, Ra'fat Ali, Adnan Awad, Khaled Yousef, Walid Abdul Rahman, Munir Abu Hantash, Aref Hussein, Nart Yada, Bassam Al Khatib.

Seven of Al Faisali's players, who were on leave to take part in the Arab Champions Cup in Morocco, will join the national team's training camp in Muscat. They are Ahmad Khalil, Mohammad Mahadin, Jamal Abu Abed, Suhbi Suleiman, Ja'far Hammad, Hassouneh Sheikh and Jiryes Tadros.

Egypt's Al Ahli won the championship followed by Morocco's Olympic Khreibkeh, Al Faisali finished third and Morocco's Al Raja fourth.

## More pre-race blood testing in prospect — IOC

LAUSANNE, Switzerland. (R) — More athletes may have to get used to the sight of a doctor with a needle demanding blood from their bodies before a race following experiments at the recent Nordic skiing World Championships.

Blood was taken from some cross-country racers at the championships in Norway just before races and tested for high levels of haemoglobin to see whether they were cheating with blood doping. If their levels were too high, they were thrown out of the race.

Internationally, Olympic Committee (IOC) doping expert Patrick Schamasch said on Monday that he was following the developments. It is possible that international skiing officials could ask for similar tests to be used for the first time at next year's Nagano Winter Olympics.

International Ski Federation (FIS) Chief Marc Hodler added: "We introduced the tests because 85 per cent of our competitors wanted them. Maybe the athletes will now go to the IOC and ask for them. Maybe our medical commission might also make the decision to ask for them."

Skiing officials are believed to be very keen to bring in the tests at the Games in Japan since they were welcomed by almost every leading competitor at the Trondheim championships. In the past athletes have been tested only after races.

Olympic sources said IOC doping experts were at present against introducing the tests because they were not sure that they were completely reliable.

But IOC medical director Schamasch said after an executive board meeting here: "If an international federation asks for something like this the IOC can study and discuss it. We also have a duty to protect athletes in so far as they must be healthy enough to compete."

High haemoglobin levels boost endurance by enabling the blood to transport more oxygen to working muscles. They can be increased by blood doping, a technique in which blood is taken from an athlete's body and pumped back just before competition.

Injecting erythropoietin (EPO), the most dangerous banned drug in sport which is believed to have killed athletes in the past, also has a similar effect because it stimulates the production of red blood cells.

But athletes are playing with their lives by cheating with both methods since they can also lead to a thickening of blood and heart attacks.

Schamasch said one of the advantages of testing before races as well as afterwards was that athletes could be stopped from damaging their bodies. The IOC had a duty to carry out preventative medicine as well as catch cheats, he said.

The pre-race blood tests could become even more

important since it is looking more and more likely that the IOC will not have a test for EPO in place by the Nagano Games despite the fact that cycling has decided to introduce a test for the drug this year.

The IOC said last October that it hoped to introduce an EPO test within months.

But Schamasch said: "We would like to be ready for Nagano. We are making good progress... But we can't say definitely when we will have it. The important thing is that the test is reliable since it could lead to sanctions."

The IOC is also unlikely to be ready to test for human growth hormones — the expensive designer drugs which are rapidly replacing muscle-building steroids as a short-cut to glory — by the 2000 Sydney Summer Games.

Asked when he thought there would be a test for the hormones, Schamasch said: "Not before 1998, 1999. And I am not so optimistic about the year 2000."

All tests have to be 100 per cent reliable before they are introduced in view of the increasing number of lawsuits in sport.

But cycling has decided it has to introduce an EPO test now since the abuse of the drug is believed to be widespread. It is suspected that 18 riders in Europe have died taking the drug since it was first introduced in the mid-1980s to treat kidney disease.

## Barkley plans Friday return from hip injury

HOUSTON (AFP) — Charles Barkley, the latest Houston Rocket sidelined in a season filled with injuries, vows he will be ready to return on Friday when his team visits the Los Angeles Lakers.

Barkley, the National Basketball Association's number two rebounder with 13.6 a game, injured his left hip when Dallas centre Shawn Bradley's right knee slammed into it, causing a gash and a bone bruise.

Doctors told Barkley he would miss at least a week, but he promised to be ready in time for the middle match in a five-game road trip that begins in Los Angeles on Tuesday against the Clippers.

"We brought him here to play and he is always the one getting hurt, and by Shawn Bradley no less," Houston's Mario Elie joked.

"We're really going to get on him now."

Barkley and Bradley are friends who dined together last Friday, the night before Barkley was hurt. Both joined Michael Jordan in the movie "Space Jam."

"He takes me to dinner and I repay him by sending him to the hospital," Bradley said. "I never hit anyone so hard. My knee is still swollen. I limped around the rest of the game."

Houston already lost guard Brent Price to a season-ending knee injury last week and guard Clyde Drexler is out with a torn hamstring.

Nigerian-born Rocket centre Hakeem Olajuwon remains confident even as teammates fall around him.

"We just have to be determined to win games," Olajuwon said. "We have been in this situation before. We just have to play hard, stay positive and hopefully everybody will be back for the last month or so before the playoffs."

## Pippen, Jordan lead Bulls past Bucks

CHICAGO (R) — Scottie Pippen scored 21 of his 25 points in the third quarter as the Chicago Bulls breezed past the slumping Milwaukee Bucks, 108-90 for their 21st straight home win on Monday.

Pippen shot 8-of-11 from the field in the quarter, including 3-of-4 from three-point range. He scored 12 straight Chicago points in one stretch and sat out most of the final period.

Michael Jordan scored 24 of his 31 points in the first half for the Bulls, who are 27-1 at home. Chicago has won nine of its last 10 overall and eight straight against Milwaukee, which has lost six consecutive games.

"The way things are going for us, it probably looks easy but we are complementing each other perfectly lately," Jordan said. "I had a big first half and Scottie was on fire in the third quarter. Milwaukee is a good team. When some of their young guys mature, they can be better."

Glenn Robinson scored 23 points and Vin Baker added 16 for the Bucks.

At Golden State, Karl Malone tied a season-high with 41 points, including 20 in the final quarter, as the Utah Jazz outlasted the Golden State Warriors, 111-104.

Malone scored 15 points in the game's final seven minutes.

Jeff Hornacek added 23 points and eight assists and John Stockton had 11 and eight for the Jazz, who have won 19 of their last 23 games.

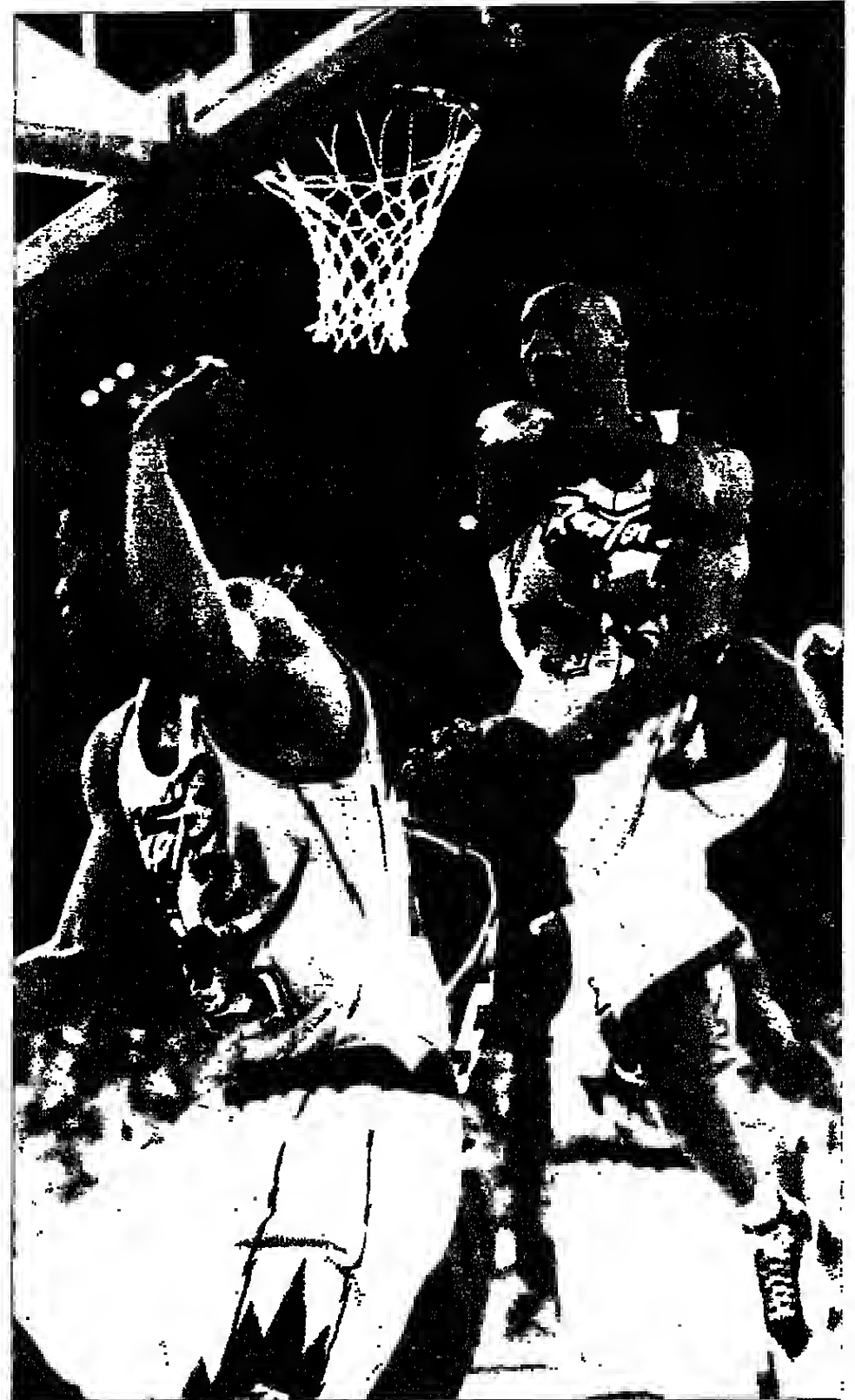
Utah shot a torrid 60 per cent (39-of-65) from the field and committed just 12 turnovers.

Chris Mullen scored a season-high 28 points for Golden State.

In Toronto, the Boston Celtics snapped a 13-game slide with just their third road win of the season, a 107-103 victory over the Toronto Raptors.

Todd Day scored 15 of his 27 points in the fourth quarter for the Celtics.

"We were hard-pressed for a victory tonight," Day said. "Maybe we can get



Toronto Raptor's #7 Clifford Rozier, (R), goes high to stop Boston Celtic's #55 Eric Williams, (C), as teammate Marcus Camby, (L), looks on during first-half NBA action at the Skydome in Toronto. Rozier was given a foul on the play (Reuters photo)

something positive out of this. A win is a win when you're a Boston Celtic right now."

Antoine Walker had 21 points and 10 rebounds and Eric Williams added 20 for the Celtics.

Carlos Rogers scored 17 points and Damon Stoudamire 11 and 17 assists for Toronto. Walt

Williams scored 16 points.

In Sacramento, Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf hit all three of his three-pointers in a pivotal third-quarter spurt as the Sacramento Kings built a 25-point lead and held on for a 108-95 victory over the New Jersey Nets.

Abdul-Rauf finished with 22 points on 9-of-12 shooting from the field and

Mitch Richmond added 19 for the Kings, who have won three of their last four games and averaged a loss at New Jersey last Tuesday.

Sam Cassell scored 24 points and Kendall Gill added 20 for the Nets, who have lost seven of their last 10.

Sacramento took control of the game in the second quarter, as Corliss Williamson had seven points in a 13-4 run that saw the Kings open a 45-32 lead.

Williamson finished with 17 points in 18 minutes off the bench for the Kings.

### NBA RESULTS

Boston	107	Toronto	103
Chicago	108	Milwaukee	90
Utah	111	Golden State	104
Sacramento	108	New Jersey	95

## Marseille want Keegan, says press report

LONDON (AFP) — Marseille are hoping to take on former Newcastle manager Kevin Keegan as coach to herald a new era at the Stade Velodrome, an English newspaper reported on Tuesday.

Keegan, who has recently signed up with English commercial television channel ITV as a football commentator, walked out on Newcastle in January after five years with the club he took from the bottom of the first division to the top of the Premiership.

"I am looking forward to my new life away from football. I really enjoyed my five years but time to come, time to go. The future is really interesting," Keegan had said at the time.

However he added: "At this stage I would say 'that's it', but you never say 'never again'."

The Guardian newspaper now claims Keegan, who is friends with Marseille president Robert-Louis Dreyfus, is a target of the South Coast Club, which won the 1993 European Cup before becoming embroiled in a match-rigging scandal.

Marseille were found guilty of rigging a match against Valenciennes in the French first division which eventually saw them demoted to the second division and prevented from defending their European title.

And former club president Bernard Tapie has been in jail since February 3 serving an eight-month jail term in the wake of the controversy which rocked French football during the summer of '93.

Dreyfus is also reportedly unhappy with current coach Gerard Gili in a season when Marseille are out of the title race and the French Cup. Marseille have a tradition of success, winning the league nine times and five times consecutively from 1989 to 1993.

Keegan, who paid a world record 15 million pounds (\$22.5 million) on England striker Alan Shearer in an

attempt to win

Newcastle's first English championship in 70 years, sensationally walked out as manager on January 8.

He told the Newcastle board he wanted to resign at the end of the season but both parties agreed it would be better if he left immediately.

Keegan said at the time he no longer wished to remain in football management at that stage of his life.

Keegan also has a superb record as a player.

He played for Scunthorpe, Liverpool, German side SV Hamburg, Southampton and Newcastle and was twice European Player of the Year.

He won 63 caps and scored 21 goals for England between 1972 and 1982.

He retired from playing in 1984 but was talked into taking over as manager of Newcastle in 1992 and won promotion for the side the following season.

Newcastle made him director of football in 1994 in a deal that tied him to club for next 10 years.

However, it seemed at times as if he had money to burn and his seven million pound signing of Colombian striker Faustino Asprilla from Italian side Parma late last season appeared to upset the team pattern at a crucial stage in the run-in to the championship.

But a better climate at Marseille and the challenge of coaching at a high profile club, which won promotion back to the first division last season, might be just the inducement Keegan needs to replenish his batteries.

## Privalova leads Russian charge in Paris indoor championships

MOSCOW (R) — Sprinter Irina Privalova will spearhead a strong Russian challenge at this weekend's World Indoor Championships in Paris, along with Olympic pole vault champion Maxim Tarasov and triple jumper Inna Lasovskaya.

"We expect a strong showing by Privalova, Tarasov and Lasovskaya," Russian Athletics Federation President Valentin Balakhnichenov said. The Russians reckon the squad is capable of winning three or four golds in Paris.

Privalova, who set a year's best 60 metres of 7.02 seconds in France last month, has her sights on both that distance and the 200 metres in Paris.

The offer of prize money for the first time is a clear draw for the 44-strong Russian squad. But double Olympic champion

Svetlana Masterkova will be absent, preferring to save herself for the summer 800 and 1,500 metre campaigns.

Decathlete Lev Lobodin, in whom the Russians had placed hopes for an indoor heptathlon medal after his defection from Ukraine, is also left out under rules stipulating a year of residence before he can compete for his newly adopted country.

"It is a pity, but Lobodin will not be able to take part," Balakhnichenov said. The team heads for Paris on Wednesday.

Tarasov's 5.80 metres in the pole vault was the high point of a lacklustre national indoor championships in Volgograd last month. Igor Trandenkov, runner up to Tarasov in Atlanta, will miss Paris because of a knee operation.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL:634144  
**PHILADELPHIA "1"**

Eddie Murphy, Jada Pinkett & James Coburn..... in

**THE NUTTY PROFESSOR**

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:634144  
**PHILADELPHIA "2"**

Brad Pitt, Julia Ormond, Anthony Hopkins & Aidan Quinn...in  
**LEGENDS OF THE FALL**

Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:699238  
**PLAZA**

Adel Imam, Shireen & Saeed Saleh  
**Bakhit Wa Adilah (2)**  
**Al Jardal Walkankah**

Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL:677420  
**CONCORD**

CONCORD "1"  
CURT RUSSEL & STEVEN SEGAL...IN  
**EXECUTIVE DECISION**  
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30  
CONCORD "2"  
Michael Jordan...in  
**SPACEJAM**  
Shows: 3:30, 6:00

**Nabil & Hisham's Theatre**  
TEL: 625155

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## Philippoussis fires 'rocket' serve

SCOTSDALE (AFP) — Australia's Mark Philippoussis slammed the hardest serve of his career here Monday on his way to a first-round victory at a \$303,000 ATP event.

In rallying to beat wild card entrant Tommy Haas of Germany 2-6, 6-3, 6-4, Philippoussis smashed a personal-best serve of 139 mph (222.4 km/h).

That effort matched Britain's Greg Rusedski for the fastest serve recorded on the ATP tour this season.

son.

All four other opening matches Monday also went three sets, with France's Jerome Golmard pulling the stunner of the session by ousting defending champion and second seed Wayne Ferreira of South Africa 4-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Golmard's serve prove too much for second seed Ferreira, who was also the victim in the Frenchman's only prior victory over a top-10 foe. That came in the 1995 U.S. Open.

Australian Open finalist and third seeded Spaniard Carlos Moya struggled past Sweden's Mikael Tillstrom, 3-6, 6-2, 7-6 (7/2) while Argentina's Hernan Gumeny beat Sweden's Magnus Larsson 6-3, 5-7, 6-4.

Pat McEnroe pulled out with a shoulder injury and his replacement, fellow American Bryan Shelton, upset seventh seed Malivai Washington 3-6, 7-5, 6-2.

## Pressure mounts among 2004 Olympics rivals

LAUSANNE (AFP) — Mounting Olympic pressure has begun to tell with one of the 11 cities bidding for the 2004 games hitting out at a rival.

"Rome is trying to knock us off but all the indications are that we should be on the shortlist," Chris Ball, chief executive officer of the company in charge of the Cape Town bid, said.

Ball said he had been warned to beware of "skulduggery" as the Olympic race heated up and he claimed it was Rome that had raised the issue of crime in Cape Town.

"The IOC itself understands that crime is not an issue in the Games," he said. "The issue is security and Rome has a bigger security problem than Cape Town has."

"If Rome can persuade the world that Cape Town is not safe, then Cape Town can't beat Rome."

"But, thankfully, the message is coming through that we are well organised and, in preparation terms, we are strong. We must rank about fourth if you want to make a weighting on technical issues," he added.

An International Olympic Committee evaluation commission drew up a 350-page report after spending five days in each of the bidding cities — Athens, Buenos Aires, Cape Town, Istanbul, Lille, Rio de Janeiro, Rome, San Juan, Seville, Stockholm and St. Petersburg — and an Olympic panel will make a cut of five finalists on Friday.

The full IOC session decides on the eventual winner on September 5.

Italian reaction to a report which found few weaknesses in the Rome bid was understandably upbeat although Raffaele Ranucci, director general of the bid committee, was keen to disprove critics of Italy being a country where nothing is done on time.

"Let's finally show that this is a country that can get things done," he said.

"We don't want to remain a country which says it's beautiful to have the coliseum," he says. "Rome is Rome. We love it. It's beautiful but it's not enough."

However, opponents of Rome accused officials of lying about how they would pay for the Olympics.

"We're not surprised by the evaluation as it was based on superficial and falsely construed data provided by the bid's organising committee," said Cristiano Brughita, spokesman for the committee against the Olympics in Rome.

Italy scrambled to build gleaming white elephants for the 1990 World Cup soccer finals.

Rome got a \$50 million rail terminal to link the city to its main airport, but it now lies empty while the cost of converting Rome's Olympic stadium for the soccer tournament was almost three times over budget.

Athens lost out when it campaigned against Atlanta for the 1996 Games because it continually argued that Greece should be an automatic choice because Athens was the birthplace of the games in

776 BC and venue of the first modern edition in 18, Yanna Angelopoulos, president of Athens' bidding committee, says they have changed their tack.

"We are proud of our Olympic heritage but we don't depend on it to win the Games. The view that we are owed the Olympics was wrong," said the 41-year-old lawyer and wife of shipping tycoon Theodore Angelopoulos.

"This is a totally new bid with a totally new attitude," she added. "Eighty per cent of the sports facilities are in place and we have the money for the rest."

But environmental lobbyists were unhappy with the bid.

"We have seen no provisions for the long-term protection of the environment in the planned large-scale construction for the Olympics," said Greenpeace spokesman, Stelios Psomas.

Angelopoulos countered: "The metro will drastically reduce pollution. Athens is changing and we feel more ready than ever to host the Olympics."

Stockholm, which trumped its image as a clean-air city, says it will organise the greenest Games ever if selected.

Stockholm spokesman Finn Persson said the pleasant weather made the city an attractive candidate.

"The climate will help performances, in particular in athletics," he added. "I firmly believe we will make the next step and we are looking forward to winning the real final on September 5th."

But former Swedish premier Ingvar Carlsson, given the job of reversing the Swedes' negative opinion about the games, is still bothered by lack of home support.

"I am a little concerned that there seems to be such weak support among

Swedes because Sweden and Swedish sport needs the Olympics," he said.

If Stockholm is green then Buenos Aires is playing the safety card.

"It's one of the biggest, safest cities in the world," says Francisco Mayorga, the Argentine tourism secretary and former racing driver heading the city's Olympic bid.

He played down the fact that Rome and Athens had emerged as front-runners.

"I know that from 30 years of racing you can't say who will win until you see the flag," he said.

Buenos Aires makes a historical claim as the only one of the 12 founding nations of International Olympic Committee in 1894 not to have hosted the Games.

It is making its fifth bid, after failing in 1936, 1944, 1956, when it was runner-up, and 1968, to become the first South American city to host the Games.

Rio de Janeiro dismissed criticism of pollution and transport problems.

"Our proposal recognised the city's problems and it is precisely these we want to change," said Ronaldo Cesar Coelho, president of Rio de Janeiro's Olympic Committee.

"We've made no secret of our shortcomings. We actually took the IOC members into a favela (shanty town). How many other candidate cities could have done that," he said.

Lille mayor Pierre Mauroy refused to share French sports minister Guy Druet's pessimism.

"Nothing's over," he said of Druet's comments.

"From the start, I drew attention to the difficulty of the task and warned that Lille would not be a favourite," Druet said last week. "We must conclude that we have not quite done enough."

The other candidates were refusing to lie down.

## Jordan to miss 17th Asian Women's Basketball Championship

### Federation brings women's team back to square one

By Aileen Bannayan  
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Two years ago, they made history by becoming the first Arab women's team to take part in the Asian Basketball Championship.

Now they are back to square one as the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) recently decided that Jordan will not be taking part in the 17th championship in Bangkok, Thailand April 28-May 7.

According to sources, the justification given by the federation was lack of funds for such an endeavour. However, other indications show that the JBF is not entirely committed to the women's team.

"A week ago everything seemed to be fine and players were training hard. However, the players and myself were dumbfounded when we found out, through the newspapers, that Jordan would not take part in the upcoming championship," JBF member and head of women's basketball Nadia Abu Judum told the Jordan Times.

While sports federations are usually responsible for providing teams with all necessary facilities including practice courts, training camps and funds for international competitions, the women's team has had to do all of the above without the federation's support.

This is not a new scenario, however, last time it had a happy ending.

In the 1995 championship in Shizuoka, Japan, fund-raising efforts by the team's coach, manager and players amounted to JD 8,000.



Jordan's Jumana Salti goes up for a basket during the match against Indonesia which Jordan won to finish fifth in the 1995 Asian Basketball Championship in Japan (file photo)

When that amount fell short of their target of JD 13,000. Their Royal Highnesses Crown Prince Hassan and Princess Sarvath intervened and covered the rest enabling the team to finally achieve their history-making participation.

Ever since, the Crown Prince and Princess have kept a close watch over women's basketball and closely monitored the junior team's participation in the Asian Junior Championship last April in which Jordan also participated for the first time and came in eighth among 12 competing teams.

"During the past two years, Jordan became a well-known name in Asian basketball circles. It was finally on the map on

women's basketball. Cancelling participation this time is definitely a step in the wrong direction," said Asian Basketball Confederation Vice-Chairman and former JBF head Awwad Haddad.

Jordan was ranked third in the upcoming competition and withdrawing this time means Jordan will have to secure qualification to take part in any future championship.

But will there be a possible next time for the team? Players seem skeptical.

"I really do not want to play basketball anymore. Neither with the national team nor my own club," said Sirsa Naghaway, an avid member of the national team who took part in the previous championship.

Naghaway, a third year medical student expressed her frustration over the way the JBF chose to announce their decision.

"When they decided not to participate, I think we should have been the first to know. I used to wake up at 4 a.m. in order to finish my studies, go to class and catch up with practice in the evening. This is unfair," she lamented.

While the JBF said that JD 12,500 was needed to cover the cost of preparation and participation, this team's players settle for far less than members of other national teams.

"The JBF has not even provided the team with a practice court, nor have any of them attended training session," head coach Fadi Sabhah explained.

The team therefore practised wherever their coach and team manager managed to find practice courts through personal contacts, and therefore the JBF did not incur any expenses in that regard.

Furthermore, knowing that the JBF has a limited budget, players are not paid for expenses incurred during practice.

That leaves only travel expenses to Bangkok which amount to just over JD 7,500 — an attainable target for the JBF.

Hala Muheisen, the team's fiery playmaker said players trained in the outdoor football stadium at the Orthodox Club just to keep in shape their physical fitness during this past month.

"I delayed my university graduation as I had my university classes scheduled around practice," she said.

Team veteran Rana Hussein said players "were ready to accept such sacrifices only because it is a lifetime chance and honour to represent one's country."

"The women's team was non-existent for 13 years. It was revived with the championship in Japan, however the JBF's latest decision has again ended our dream of representing our country."

The national team includes Taroub Khouri, Rana Hussein, Rania Dajani, Hala Muheisen, Sirsa Naghaway, Hala Ghattas, Lubna Masri, Luma Abu Judum, Tetyana Qardan, Tamara Khadra, Zein Shasha'a, Indera Qasesieh, Hind Ghouri and Tala Al Mauge.

## SPORTS IN BRIEF

### Lottery to fund British bids

LONDON (R) — Britain is hopeful of hosting more than 20 International Sporting events over the next three years with the help of funds from the national lottery. Up to three million pounds (\$4.9 million) per year was pledged on Monday to help attract major future events such as soccer's 2006 World Cup, the Olympics and the Commonwealth Games. "I want to see the U.K. becoming a world stage for prestige events," commented British government sports minister Iain Sprouat.

### NBA giant signs movie deal

WASHINGTON (AFP) — First Shaquille O'Neal starred in "Blue Chips" and "Kazzam." Then Michael Jordan led several National Basketball Association stars and animated characters in "Space Jam." Now look out Hollywood — here comes George Muresan, the tallest player in NBA history at 2.31 metres. The Romanian centre for the Washington Bullets has signed to play alongside Billy Crystal in "My Giant," a comedy that will begin filming in late June in Italy. The film is about a man whose life is saved by a giant. The man, played by Crystal, then goes about trying to repay the giant, played by Muresan.

### Rodman becomes swimsuit model

CHICAGO (AFP) — Dennis Rodman, the flamboyant National Basketball Association (NBA) rebounding leader from the Chicago Bulls, has taken up a new career — swimsuit model. Rodman will be featured wearing a two-piece swimsuit in a seductive pose on the cover of sport magazine's swimsuit issue Parody, set to reach United States news-stands on Friday. "The worm" has turned up on magazine covers before. But never so exposed. He will be showing off his tattoo-covered body, hilly buttox hoop, blond hairdo and blue eye shadow. His red and white swimsuit was made by a firm called trashy lingerie.

### Real Madrid cruise 9 points clear

MADRID (AFP) — Real Madrid surged nine points clear of rivals Barcelona in the Spanish first division Monday night when they came away 2-0 winners from Espanyol. Real scored both of the goals — the first after 68 minutes and the second in the dying seconds. Real now have 62 points from 27 outings while Barcelona, who crashed badly when they were beaten 4-0 by Tenerife on Saturday, have 53 points.

### GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF  
& TAMARA HIRSCH  
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♥ A 10 9 7 4  
♦ 10 8 5 4  
♣ 10 7 4 3

**EAST**  
♠ 6 5 5 2  
♥ J 7 6 3  
♦ K J  
♣ 9 7 6 2

**SOUTH**  
♠ A K J  
♥ A Q 7 4  
♦ Q 8 2  
♣ A K J

The bidding:  
SOUTH: 1♠, 2NT, 3♠, 4♠, 5♠, 6♠, 7♠, 8♠, 9♠, 10♠, 11♠, 12♠, 13♠, 14♠, 15♠, 16♠, 17♠, 18♠, 19♠, 20♠, 21♠, 22♠, 23♠, 24♠, 25♠, 26♠, 27♠, 28♠, 29♠, 30♠, 31♠, 32♠, 33♠, 34♠, 35♠, 36♠, 37♠, 38♠, 39♠, 40♠, 41♠, 42♠, 43♠, 44♠, 45♠, 46♠, 47♠, 48♠, 49♠, 50♠, 51♠, 52♠, 53♠, 54♠, 55♠, 56♠, 57♠, 58♠, 59♠, 60♠, 61♠, 62♠, 63♠, 64♠, 65♠, 66♠, 67♠, 68♠, 69♠, 70♠, 71♠, 72♠, 73♠, 74♠, 75♠, 76♠, 77♠, 78♠, 79♠, 80♠, 81♠, 82♠, 83♠, 84♠, 85♠, 86♠, 87♠, 88♠, 89♠, 90♠, 91♠, 92♠, 93♠, 94♠, 95♠, 96♠, 97♠, 98♠, 99♠, 100♠.

Opening lead: Four of a South Africa won both the Open and Women's events at the recent Africa/Middle East zonal bridge championships to qualify for the World Team Championships to be held in Beijing, China, in October. This deal proved too much for most of the competitors.

North's three clubs was a modern gadget that asked for a five-card

major suit, which South denied holding. North then made the power move to six no trump.

Those declarers who cashed the ace of diamonds when they first attacked the suit did well. However, the percentage play in diamonds is to take two finesse. As the cards lie, that line is doomed to fail.

One declarer, Hani Dagher of Egypt, showed that, with correct technique, the hand could be made. At trick one, Dagher overtook dummy's queen of spades and led a diamond to the nine, losing to the jack.

The spade return was won in hand, dummy discarding a heart, and declarer decided that the second diamond finesse could be postponed. First, declarer cashed the ace and king of clubs, and was delighted when the queen dropped.

The jack of clubs was cleared and a heart to the king provided the entry to cash the ten of clubs, declarer shuffling the queen of diamonds from hand.

When declarer next cashed the ace and queen of hearts, the 3-3 split in that suit set up declarer's seven of hearts as the 12th trick, so the second diamond finesse became superfluous. In all, declarer scored three spade tricks, four hearts, four clubs and the ace of diamonds!

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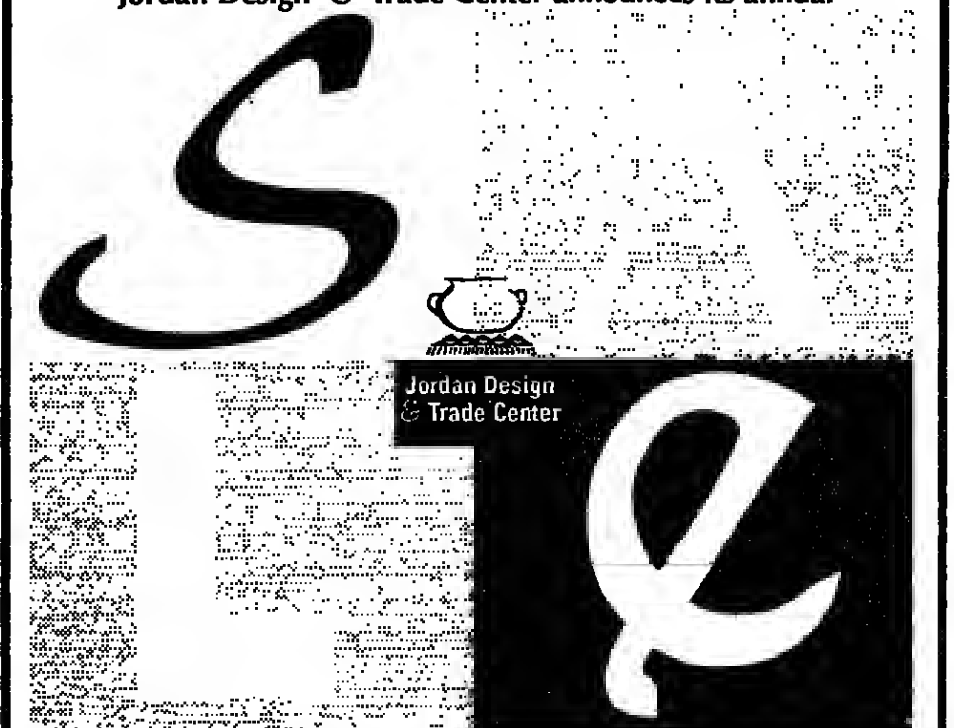
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# Iraq not to ask U.N. for more oil exports until food arrives

NEW YORK (Agencies) — Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed Al-Sahaf lashed out at the United Nations on Monday for its sluggish delivery of food and medicine under the oil-for-food deal, calling the situation "unbelievable."

During an interview with Reuters, Al Sahaf said any discussion of Baghdad wanting to increase oil sales was premature, as was talk of what course Iraq would take when the \$2 billion, six-month deal expires in June. "As much as Iraq is concerned, we are not interested in this, not at all. In particular in light of the dragging (on food delivery), the main agreement between Iraq and the U.N. is not implemented," Mr. Sahaf said.

"We concentrate on lifting sanctions. As for Resolution 986, this is not a big deal, it's something very temporary," Mr. Sahaf met earlier on Monday with the head of the U.N.'s Iraq sanctions committee, Portuguese Ambassador Antonio Monteiro, suggesting technical changes to speed aid delivery.

"I suggested to him several suggestions to readjust mechanisms of the sanctions committee to overcome this dragging. They have now on the table 220 contracts to supply Iraq with food and medicine they processed only eight. It is unbelievable," Al-Sahaf said.

He said the committee had put itself into a "strait-jacket" through its cumbersome work practices. "They hired four experts to process 36 oil contracts, but there are 220 contracts to provide Iraq with food and they have only two experts," said Mr. Sahaf.

In addition to hiring at least six food contract experts, or overseers, he said Iraq suggested the committee allow approval of import contracts before oil receipts were deposited into a special escrow account, a move previously under consideration by the panel.

Also, Iraq wants mechanisms changed so that food contracts would be processed according to the total food basket needs, not the current chronological

order. "Food contracts are considered now by when they arrive at the Sanctions Committee," he said, noting the first bulk of contracts were for tea alone, ignoring sugar, wheat and other more vital commodities.

"Should we distribute to Iraq's 22 million people only tea?" Mr. Sahaf asked.

Despite U.N. projections for food and medicine deliveries to start mid-March, Mr. Sahaf said Iraq had no firm schedule for when they would begin. "Nobody can tell," he said.

Mr. Sahaf said Monday's action by the U.N. Security Council to maintain broad trade sanctions on Iraq did not dampen Baghdad's desire to work for a solution with weapons inspectors, and the head of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM), Rolf Ekeus.

However, Mr. Sahaf reiterated statements from Baghdad claiming that Mr. Ekeus was "fickle."

"Mr. Ekeus has the tendency to stretch things, expand whenever he can any small negative issue and compact, encapsulate a lot of details of positive issues. We think this is very unfortunate," said Mr. Sahaf.

"While he is an international civil servant he should be neutral, constructive, serve a real purpose to reach a result which will satisfy the Security Council and Iraq."

Mr. Sahaf said revelations made public on Monday that Iraq admitted it had bought 3,800 kilograms of nerve gas VX, was old news, saying the admission was identical to a report filed by Mr. Ekeus last year.

"Word by word this was mentioned last year. It was part of an old programme," said Mr. Sahaf. He noted attempts to verify the destruction of the nerve agents would be difficult due to the makeup of the weapon.

Still, he said it was "like a joke" that any neighbour of Iraq should be concerned about potential nerve gas stocks, saying they did not exist.

Meanwhile, the United States on Monday branded

as "outrageous" Iraqi accusations that Washington was guilty of genocide and said it was Iraqi President Saddam Hussein who had tried to wipe out whole populations.

Iraqi trade Minister Mohammed Mehdi Saleh told a news conference in Baghdad that the United States was "using an act of genocide against the Iraqi people" by delaying the arrival of food and medicine under Baghdad's oil-for-food deal with the United Nations.

"Needless to say, this is an outrageous charge for the Iraqis to make," State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns told reporters.

"If anyone has practised genocide, if anyone has tried to wipe out whole populations, it's Saddam Hussein with the Kurds in the north and the Shia in the south (of Iraq)," he said, referring to Iraq's actions after the 1991 Gulf war defeat.

Mr. Burns also described as "just nonsense" the charge that the United States was to blame for delays in implementing the oil-for-food deal under Resolution 986.

"We were the sponsor of 986, we wanted to go forward," he said. "The problem is the Iraqis are throwing barriers up in the monitoring of U.N. Resolution 986, which was one of the conditions that the United Nations insisted on."

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Thursday Iraq's health system was close to collapse and medicines and other life-saving supplies scheduled for importation under the oil deal had failed to arrive.

Mr. Saleh said in Baghdad that Iraq had submitted 222 contracts for buying food and medicine under the deal but the United Nations had approved only nine so far. Only one of the approved contracts is for medicine.

Iraqi Health Minister Umeed Madhat Mubarak on Monday blamed the hold-up on American representatives on the U.N. Sanctions Committee.



CROWN PRINCE MEETS EU ENVOY: His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Tuesday holds talks with the European Union's special envoy to the Middle East, Miguel Angel Moratinos, who arrived here on Tuesday on a short visit to Jordan (see story on page 1) (photo by Boghos)

## Crown Prince to address London conference on enhancing EU-Mediterranean cooperation

By Ghali Alul  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan will deliver a keynote address to a conference on new economic opportunities in the Mediterranean to be held in London on March 6-7.

The Crown Prince's participation in the conference is part of his efforts to "bring the regional countries of the Mediterranean closer to the European thinking," said a press release issued Tuesday by the British embassy in Jordan.

The conference will bring together the 12 Mediterranean countries and the European Union (EU) with the aim of promoting investment opportunities in the Mediterranean region.

"The conference is targeted at investors, businesses, and financial institutions in the EU, as well as businesses in the region looking for partnerships and inward

investment," said the press release.

The head of the Commission of the European Communities in Jordan, Yves Gazzo, told the Jordan Times the conference would discuss the economic situation in countries of the Mediterranean region and steps to be taken to promote economic growth and improve the investment climate as well as to enhance private sector involvement in the economic activities of these countries.

"This conference will provide oxygen to the Mediterranean," said Mr. Gazzo.

He added that the meeting was part of the EU's efforts to implement the declarations of the November 1995 Barcelona Conference, which aim at economic interaction and security and political cooperation as well as cooperation in social, cultural and human affairs.

The Barcelona Conference also called for the

establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean partnership as well as a free trade area by the year 2010.

The London meeting also comes "as part of the U.K.'s contribution to the EU's Mediterranean initiative," the press release quoted the British secretary of state for foreign and Commonwealth affairs, Malcolm Rifkind, as saying.

"I am delighted that the U.K. will stage this major international conference. This will give fresh impetus to the Euro-Mediterranean partnership launched in Barcelona."

The Mediterranean basin is an area of economic opportunity in the making. Investors from the U.K. and other EU countries have a vital contribution to make to the success of economic reforms in these Mediterranean countries," Mr. Rifkind, who will deliver the opening address to the conference, added.

The EU last year allocated 4.6 billion European

Currency Units (ECUs) (\$5.8 billion) in grants to support the economic reform programme carried out by the Mediterranean countries for the year 1996-1999.

Jordan was last year granted 100 million ECUs (\$128 million) as part of the union's support for the country's economic reform programme.

Mr. Gazzo added that following the conference the Crown Prince will discuss bilateral issues with European Commission Vice President Manuel Marin, who will also be one of the key speakers at the conference.

The conference, which is partly financed by the European Commission, is organised by the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) in association with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the European Commission.



### Man or woman? Who chairs?

CANBERRA (R) — When is a woman not a woman? According to Australia's conservative prime minister, when she is a chairman. Prime Minister John Howard, elected a year ago on a platform that included embracing family values and spurning political correctness, has ordered a return to the use of the word "chairman" in government legislation. The leftist Labour government Howard ousted from office last March had adopted the gender-neutral word "chairperson."

### Teacher held for raping 12 students

JAKARTA (AFP) — A Muslim teacher in Tangerang, a town nearby Jakarta, has been arrested for allegedly raping 12 of his students, all under the age of 14, a report said here Tuesday. Tangerang police chief Lieutenant Colonel Iman Haryatna said a man identified only as A.S., 21, was arrested Sunday after a complaint from the parents of one of his students. "The daughter, who had haemorrhaged, told her parents she had been sexually molested by her teacher in a private lesson at his house," Haryatna said, quoted by the Jakarta Post daily. The Tangerang police has said that A.S., who teaches Koran reading, has confessed to raping 12 of his students, aged between six and 14, because he believed the rapes increased his supernatural powers. It was unclear whether all the 12 minors he allegedly raped were girls.

### Dog's life for canine owners in Shantou

BEIJING (AFP) — The southern Chinese city of Shantou is imposing a 10,000 yuan (\$1,200) dog registration fee to discourage new owners and clamp down on attacks, the China daily newspaper reported Tuesday. The fee is considerably more than the average monthly salary. Owners will also have to pay 3,000 yuan (\$360) for the annual checkup of each dog, the report said.

### Ire over cocaine deal leads to jail

PENSACOLA, Florida (R) — Concerned that a drug dealer had sold her counterfeit crack cocaine, Rosie Lee Hill went straight to Pensacola police to complain. She was arrested after an investigating officer determined the two cocaine rocks were real, assistant police chief Jerry Potts said. Hill said she had paid \$50 for the drugs. But when she tasted them she thought they were baking soda. "It's amazing, I'll guess stranger things have happened but I haven't seen them," Potts told Reuters. "She honestly believed she was getting ripped off."

### Patten pooch escapes poisoner

HONG KONG (R) — One of governor Chris Patten's two Norfolk Terriers narrowly escaped death at the hands of Hong Kong's notorious "Bowen Road Dog Poisoner." The governor's wife, Lavender, wrote to the South China Morning Post to suggest dog owners muzzle their pets. She said the two dogs, Whisky and Soda, were leashed when she took them out for a walk along a popular trail on Hong Kong island but Whisky managed to snaffle a piece of chicken later found to have been soaked in an insecticide-type poison. Whisky survived but several other pets have not been so lucky, she wrote. She urged passersby to watch out for anyone acting suspiciously and report them to the police.

## Israel court indicts suspected organiser of suicide blasts

BEIT HANOUN (AFP) — An Israeli military court on Tuesday indicted Hassan Salameh, a 26-year-old militant, on charges he organised three suicide bombings which killed 45 people in Israel a year ago.

Salameh, a senior member of the military wing of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas), remained defiant at his arraignment, declaring that "no one has the right to stop the holy war" against Israel.

The 11-page, 31-count indictment also included charges that during a stint in an Israeli prison in 1992, Salameh tortured and murdered a Palestinian man suspected of collaborating with Israel.

Salameh stands accused of recruiting suicide bombers who blew themselves up on two Jerusalem buses a week apart in late February and early March 1996, killing 44 people.

He also allegedly recruited a third Palestinian man who killed himself and one Israeli soldier in the same week with a bomb at an army hitchhiking post outside the southern city of Ashkelon.

On his way into the military courtroom in an Israeli-controlled compound on the Gaza-Israel border, Salameh defended his actions and the armed struggle against Israel and its peace agreements with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

"No one inside or outside Hamas has the right to decide

to end armed operations because God has ordered us to continue our jihad (holy war) on his behalf," he told reporters.

"As long as the people are under occupation, the only way to solve it is with an armed struggle," he said.

Salameh, who will probably face several life sentences, said he expected he would be released soon possibly with the aid of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Salameh's mother and other relatives attended Tuesday's hearing.

Salameh was shot and arrested on May 18 near the West Bank city of Hebron by Israeli soldiers who rounded up hundreds of activists in response to the wave of bombings.

He is the most senior military Hamas official arrested by Israel in connection with the wave of suicide bombings. In addition to the three Hamas attacks, a fourth suicide bombing by the smaller Islamic Jihad killed 13 people in Tel Aviv exactly a year ago.

The man considered to be the top mastermind behind the Hamas bombings, Mohammed Dief, is believed by Israeli security officials to be hiding in the Gaza Strip.

The suicide bombings are viewed as having contributed largely to the election defeat of Labour Prime Minister Shimon Peres in late May and the arrival in power of the right-wing government head-

ed by Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu used the bombings to back up election campaign charges that Labour "concessions" to Palestinians under the Oslo self-rule accords had weakened Israel's security.

Salameh began his career with Hamas in 1990 by attacking members of the Fatah Party.

Since then, he has served time in Israeli and Palestinian jails for injuring or murdering Palestinians he suspected of collaborating with Israel or of "moral transgressions" such as prostitution.

Salameh was detained for six months in 1995 in the Gaza Strip by Palestinian security, but he was later released as part of a reconciliation bid between the PNA and Hamas.

On other occasions, Salameh escaped arrest by fleeing to Egypt, Libya, Sudan and Syria, where he organised Hamas activities with foreign group members, according to Israeli sources.

He is also accused of recruiting an activist to explode in May 1995 a donkey cart laden with bombs near Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip, injuring one slightly and killing the bomber.

Due to the number of charges against him, Salameh will face trials both at Beit Hanoun and another Israeli military court in Bet Al near the West Bank town of Ramallah.

## Engineers decide to halt protest action hoping for action on their demands

By Ghali Alul  
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Engineers Association (JEA) general assembly decided on Tuesday to freeze protest measures for two months in what they described as "a chance for the ministerial committee" to settle their demands.

The decision came following a meeting the general assembly held with public sector engineers who on Saturday staged a two-hour sit-in in front of the Prime Ministry demanding higher salaries, promotion in salary scale as well as the full implementation of a memorandum of understanding reached between the JEA and a ministerial committee.

"We decided to freeze the strike in a response to the government's desire and professional association presidents," who also attended today's meeting, JEA Vice President Husni Abu Ghida told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Abu Ghida voiced hope that the government will meet some of the engineers' demands in the next two months. Following Saturday's sit-in the engineers met with Prime Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti, who expressed willingness to study their demands.

The prime minister, who warned the engineers against taking any protest action, said that

his government would not reverse any past gains made by them, but ruled out special privileges being accorded to any specific group.

Mr. Kabariti also made clear that any future allowances system and incentives would be geared towards attracting certain specialities in the judicial, educational and technological fields.

Mr. Abu Ghida stressed that the "engineers are only demanding to regain part of their acquired rights which they enjoyed in 1988."

He said that public sector employees are rated on a scale of 1-10 the lowest being 10. He added that previous to 1988, newly graduated engineers from grade five, while today these engineers are hired as sixth grade employees with loss in benefits and allowances.

The engineers are also demanding a 180 per cent increase on their basic monthly salaries which currently average JD 150.

Mr. Abu Ghida earlier said that the government had promised to amend current by-laws regulating the allowances for public sector engineers within three months dating last October.

But, he added, "no serious action was made by the government since then."

The engineers were planning to end their protest measures with a general strike on March 22.

## Truce panel rejects Israel's complaint against Hizbollah

NAQOURA, Lebanon (AFP) — The international panel monitoring a truce accord in South Lebanon on Tuesday failed to uphold an Israeli accusation of an Hizbollah ceasefire violation, calling instead for restraint from both sides.

"The monitoring group by unanimity reaffirmed the obligation for all combatants to act strictly in accordance with the understanding of April 26, 1996," the committee said.

Under the terms of the accord which ended a 17-day Israeli onslaught in South Lebanon, Israel and anti-Israeli guerrillas pledged not to target civilians in their on-going conflict.

The committee "urged once more all those responsible to avoid using methods of operation which directly or indirectly endanger the civilian population and to show restraint and caution."

The panel — made up of representatives from Lebanon, Israel, Syria, France and the United States — issued the statement at the end of a marathon 20-hour session held at U.N. headquarters in Naqoura near the Lebanese-Israeli border.

Israel had complained that Hizbollah guerrillas fired into the outpost of Dabshah inside South Lebanon's occupation zone from a civilian-inhabited area.

One Israeli soldier was

killed and two others were wounded in the attack. Four guerrillas were killed in retaliatory fighting.

The monitoring group met at the headquarters of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in the coastal village of Naqoura inside the "security zone."

The April agreement bans Israel and Hizbollah from firing from or at civilian targets but reserves for guerrillas the right to fight Israeli troops inside the occupation zone.

Sources close to the Lebanese delegation said Lebanese officials rejected the Israeli complaint and tried to show that Hizbollah fighters fired from at least 1,500 metres away from Nabatiyeh.

The committee is chaired by France, whose Foreign Minister Herve de Charette will visit Lebanon on Thursday as part of a Middle East tour.

The panel had called on all sides to "take precautions to protect civilians" after a Lebanese complaint lodged following the Feb. 20 death of a Lebanese civilian by an Israeli bomb allegedly concealed in the form of a rock.

A day earlier, it "unanimously condemned" Israeli artillery fire which killed a Lebanese woman and wounded two other civilians.